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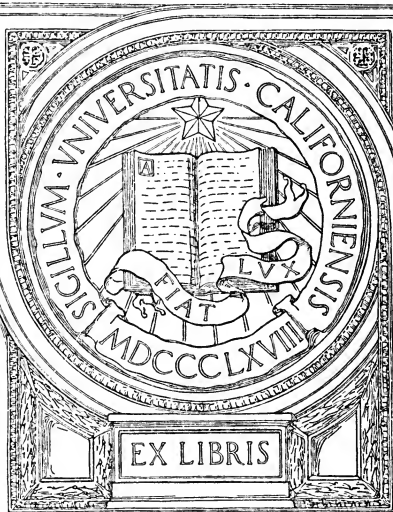
STORIES

by

AGNES STRICKLAND

GIFT OF

Mrs. W. Barstow



Albion Barstow

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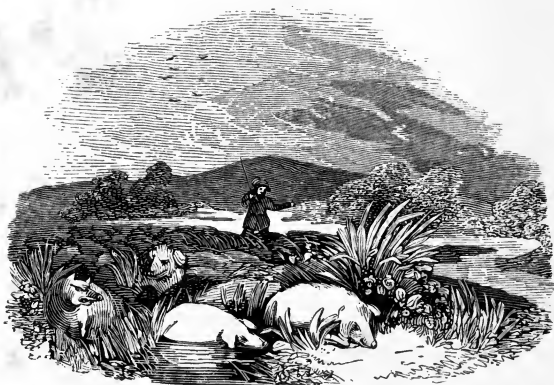




PRINCE BLADUD.



Bladud receiving a Ring from his Mother.



The Pigs in the Salt Springs.

STORIES FROM HISTORY.

BY

AGNES STRICKLAND,

AUTHOR OF "THE LIVES OF THE QUEENS OF ENGLAND," "TALES FROM
ENGLISH HISTORY," ETC.

WITH TWENTY-FOUR ENGRAVINGS.



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THE object of these Tales is to impart at once instruction and amusement to the youthful mind. Each of the stories is either founded upon, or connected with, some important event in History, and furnishes useful and entertaining information, as to the Manners and Customs of the peculiar era to which it relates. This is conveyed in language sufficiently simple to be adapted to the comprehension of Children at a very early age; but, at the same time, it is hoped that the Tales will be found interesting to readers at a much more advanced period of life.

These Tales are by no means intended to supply the place of History. They are, on the contrary, calculated to create a taste for that style of reading, by indulging the juvenile reader with an attractive portion of its choicest

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flowers, arranged in the tempting form of Stories. In addition to this, every tale is rendered the vehicle for introducing some moral lesson, calculated to improve the heart, and to impress the tender mind of Childhood with a love of virtue.

Such being the object of these Tales, it is to be hoped that they will be found not only essentially useful, but sufficiently attractive to the young, to supersede many of the silly and pernicious fictions which have hitherto, unfortunately, constituted too large a proportion of the books provided for the use of young people.

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PRINCE BLADUD.

A TALE OF THE ANCIENT BRITONS.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY BRITAIN.—TRADITIONS.—JULIUS CÆSAR.—THE BARDS
AND MINSTRELS.—KING LUD HURDEBRAS.—PRINCE BLADUD.
—IS AFFLICTED WITH LEPROSY.—BANISHED HIS FATHER'S
COURT.—THE DRUIDS.—STONEHENGE.—ROCKING-STONES.

THE early history of England, or Britain, as it was anciently called, is involved in great obscurity. The reason of this is, that its first inhabitants, a colony from some other nation, were so much occupied in providing for the actual wants of life, as to have but very little time to spare for the purpose of preserving records of the country whence they came. They were, too, in a state of barbarism, and altogether ignorant of the arts of reading or writing. When they wished to keep a memorial of any great event, such as a victory, a treaty of peace, the death of one king, or the coronation of another, they marked the spot where the occurrence took place with a heap of stones, or set up a rough hewn pillar, and bade their children recount to their descendants the circumstance which it was intended to commemorate. An imperfect memory of certain great events was thus kept alive, and the pillar, or the heap of stones, was appealed to as a memorial, long after the people who had assisted in raising it were dead.

The traditions connected with these rude memorials are the only sources from which our knowledge of some very ancient events is to be derived. They are called *traditions*, because they were not written accounts, but such as were transmitted, or handed down, through a long succession of ages, by being repeated from father to son. Sometimes, too, these traditions were made into songs, which, being easily learned by heart, very much assisted in preserving a knowledge of the events they were intended to record.

Julius Cæsar, the great Roman dictator, or, as he is by some called, the first emperor of Rome, invaded and conquered Britain, and in a great measure brought it under the yoke of Rome. This Julius Cæsar, who wrote the history of his own wars and conquests, is the first real historian who has made mention of the Britons. He calls them barbarians,—and so, in comparison with the Romans, at that time the most civilized people in the world, they certainly were,—yet, from many circumstances which he himself mentions, it is certain that they were acquainted with the art of working mines, the use of metals, and the construction of many curious and useful articles.

The Britons also practised the arts of poetry and music. They had among them Bards, who put their histories and traditions into poetry and songs, which their Minstrels, or Singers, chanted at public festivals, and on going into battle, to the sound of the harp and other musical instruments.

It is said by some ancient historians, and by those who have bestowed much pains in examining and comparing old traditions, that several kings reigned over Britain before Julius Cæsar landed in the country. Lud Hurdebras is supposed to

have been the eighth king from Brute, whom the Bards, and after them, the monkish historians, report to have been the first monarch of Britain. I am going to tell you a story of Prince Bladud, the son of this Lud Hurdebras, which, there is reason to believe, is founded on fact.

Bladud was the only child of the king and queen, and he was not only tenderly beloved by his parents, but was also considered as a child of great beauty and promise by the chiefs and the people. It, however, unfortunately happened that he was attacked with that loathsome disease, so frequently mentioned in Scripture by the name of Leprosy. The dirty habits and gross feeding of the early natives of Britain, as well as of all other uncivilized people, rendered this malady common; but at the time in which Prince Bladud lived, no cure for it was known to the Britons. Being highly infectious, therefore, all persons afflicted with it were not only held in disgust and abhorrence, but, by the barbarous laws of the times, were doomed to be driven from the abodes of their fellow-creatures, and to take their chance of life or death in the forests and the deserts, exposed alike to hunger and to beasts of prey.

So great was the horror of this disease among the heathen Britons, and so strictly was the law for preventing its extension observed, that even the rank of the young prince caused no exception to be made in his favour. Neither was his tender youth suffered to plead for sympathy; and the king himself was unable to protect his own son from the cruel treatment accorded to the lepers of those days. No sooner was the report whispered abroad, that Prince Bladud was afflicted with leprosy, than the chiefs and elders of the council assembled together, and insisted that Lud Hur-

debras should expel his son from the royal city, and drive him forth into the wilderness, in order to prevent the dreaded infection from spreading.

The fond mother of the unfortunate Bladud vainly endeavoured to prevail on her royal husband to resist this barbarous injunction. All that maternal love and female tenderness could urge, she pleaded in behalf of her only child, whose bodily sufferings rendered him but the dearer object of affection to her fond bosom.

The distressed father, however deeply and painfully he felt the queen's passionate appeal, could not act in contradiction to the general voice of his subjects; he was compelled to stifle all emotions of natural compassion for his innocent son, and to doom him to perpetual banishment.

Bladud awaited his father's decision, in tears and silence, without offering a single word of supplication, lest he should increase the anguish of his parent's heart. But, when the cruel sentence of banishment was confirmed by the voice of his hitherto doating sire, he uttered a cry of bitter sorrow, and covering his disfigured visage with both hands, turned about to leave the haunts of his childhood forever, exclaiming, "Who will have compassion upon me, now that I am abandoned by my parents?"

How sweet, how consoling, would have been the answer of a Christian parent to this agonizing question; but on Bladud's mother the heavenly light of Revelation had never shone. She knew not how to speak comfort to the breaking heart of her son, in those cheering words of Holy Writ, which would have been so applicable to his case in that hour of desertion: *When thy father and thy mother forsake thee, I will take thee up.* She could only weep with her son, and try to soothe his sor-

row by whispering a hope, which she was far from feeling, that the day might come, when he could return to his father's court, cured of the malady which was the cause of his banishment.

"But years may pass away before that happy day, if it ever should come," replied the weeping boy; "and I shall be altered in stature and in features; the tones of my voice will have become strange to your ears, my mother! Toil and sorrow will have set their hard marks upon my brow. These garments, now so brightly stained with figures that denote my royal birth and princely station, will be worn bare, or exchanged for the sheep-skin vest of indigence. How, then, will you know that I am indeed your son, should I ever present myself before you cleansed of this dreadful leprosy?"

"My son," replied the queen, taking a royal ring of carved agate from her finger, and placing it on a stand before him, for so great was the terror of contagion from those afflicted with leprosy, that even the affectionate mother of Bladud avoided the touch of her child,—“this ring was wrought by the master-hand of a Druid, a skilful worker in precious stones, within the sacred circle of Stonehenge. It was placed upon my finger before the mystic altar, when I became the wife of the king your father, and was saluted by the Arch-Druid as Queen of Britain. In the whole world, there is not another like unto it; and, should you bring it back to me, by that token shall I know you to be my son, even though the lapse of thrice ten years shall have passed away, and the golden locks of my princely boy shall be darkened with toil and time, and no longer wave over a smooth, unfurrowed brow.”

The Druids, one of whom I have mentioned,

were a peculiar people, who constituted the priesthood among the heathen Britons. They dwelt in circular houses, in the recesses of dark deep groves, where they practised barbarous rites of worship, and once a year sacrificed to their idols human victims, enclosed in gigantic wicker-work figures, made in a rude resemblance to the form of man. These Druids, however, were acquainted with astronomy, or the knowledge of the stars; they possessed a certain skill in medicine and surgery, and they understood the arts of cutting and polishing stones. Curious beads and rings, made by them from the agate stone, are even at the present time occasionally dug out of the earth, in which they have been buried for many hundred years, and are preserved in the cabinets of the curious.

Some stupendous evidences of the skill and knowledge of the Druids, as well as of the impostures which they practised on the unenlightened and idolatrous Britons, are still to be seen in various parts of our country. Among these is Stonehenge, on Salisbury Plain, consisting of huge blocks of stone, which, nearly two thousand years ago, formed part of a mystic circle, that surrounded one of their heathen temples, which has long since fallen into ruin and decay.

Among the other remains of the works of the Druids, are the great moving masses, principally found in Cornwall, and called Loggan-Stones, or Rocking Stones. These consist of a large block of stone, so finely balanced on one small point, that though it stands securely, which, in fact, it has done for many hundreds of years, yet it can be moved, and made to rock, by a very small force. These Loggan-Stones were used by the Druids for the purpose of deceiving the heathen Britons. They pretended that if the stone moved,

the Gods were kindly disposed,—and if it stood still, that they were angry with the people. But these crafty Druids were provided with an instrument which, by placing it under the point of the stone, enabled them to move it, or not, at pleasure.

The Druids were, in their day, superior in learning and useful acquirements to every other class of their countrymen, and possessed more power and influence than either kings, chiefs, or populace. They were, in effect, the secret rulers of the state, and from the profound recesses of the dark groves, wherein they concealed themselves from vulgar observation, they directed the councils of the monarch, and decided the destinies of all ranks and conditions of the people.

CHAPTER II.

THE PRINCE BECOMES ACQUAINTED WITH MATH, THE SHEPHERD-BOY.—IS HIRED BY A SWINEHERD.—HIS ADVENTURES WITH THE SWINE.—CROSSES THE AVON.—THE SWINE DISCOVER THE HOT SPRINGS.

THE unfortunate Bladud, having carefully suspended his mother's ring about his neck, bade her a tearful farewell, and slowly and sorrowfully pursued his lonely way, across the hills and downs of that part of England which is now called Somersetshire.

Evening was closing in before Bladud met with a single creature to show him the slightest compassion. At length, he was so fortunate as to encounter a shepherd-boy, who appeared in scarcely less distress than himself; for one of the sheep belonging to his flock had fallen into a ditch, the

sides of which were so steep that he was unable to pull it out without assistance.

"Stranger," said he, addressing the outcast prince, "if ever you hope to obtain pity from others, I beseech you to lend me your aid, or I shall be severely punished by my master, for suffering this sheep to fall into the ditch."

Bladud required no second entreaty, but hastily divesting himself of his princely garments, assisted the boy in extricating the sheep from the water. The grateful youth bestowed upon him, in return, a share of his coarse supper of oaten cakes. Bladud, who had not broken his fast since the morning, ate this with greater relish than he had often felt for the dainties of which he had been accustomed to partake at his father's board.

It was a fine and lovely evening; the birds were singing their evening song; and a delicious fragrance was diffused from the purple heath and the blooming wild flowers. The sheep gathered round their youthful keeper; and he took up a rustic pipe, made from the reeds that overhung the margin of a neighbouring rivulet, and played a merry tune, quite forgetful of his past trouble.

Bladud saw that a peasant boy, while engaged in the performance of his duties, might be as happy as a prince. Contentment and industry sweeten every lot, while useless repining only tends to aggravate the hardships to which it is the will of God that the human family should be exposed.

"You appear very happy," said Bladud to his new friend.

"How should I be otherwise?" replied the shepherd-boy: "I have wherewithal to eat and to drink; I have strength to labour, and health to enjoy my food. I sleep soundly on my bed of rushes after the toils of the day; and my master

never punishes me except for carelessness or disobedience."

"I wish I were a shepherd-boy, also," said the prince; "can you not tell me of some kind master, who would employ me to feed his flocks on these downs?"

The shepherd-boy shook his head, and replied, "You are a stranger lad from some distant town; most probably, by your fine painted dress, the runaway son of some great person, and unacquainted with any sort of useful occupation. Let me hear what you can do to get an honest living."

Bladud blushed deeply. He had been accustomed to spend his time in idle sports with the sons of the chieftains, and had not acquired the knowledge of anything likely to be of service in his present situation. He was silent for some minutes, but at length replied, "I can brighten arrows, string bows, and shoot at a mark."

Math, the shepherd-boy, advised his new companion, in his rustic language, not to mention these accomplishments to the peaceful herdsmen of Caynsham, (as the spot where this conference took place is now called,) lest it should create a prejudice against him; "neither," continued he, "would I counsel you to sue for service in a suit of this fashion." He laid his sun-burnt hand, as he spoke, on Bladud's painted vest, lined with the fur of squirrels, which was only worn by persons of royal rank.

"Will you, for charity's sake, then, exchange your sheep-skin coat for my costly garments?" asked Bladud.

"Had you not so kindly helped me to pull my sheep out of the ditch, I would have said to you nay," replied Math; "but as one good turn deserves another, I will even give you my true

shepherd's suit for your finery." So saying, he exchanged suits with the young prince.

"And now," said Bladud, "do you think I may venture to ask one of the herdsmen of the valley to trust me with the care of a flock?"

"Trust *you* with the care of a flock, forsooth!" cried Math, laughing; "I wonder at your presumption in thinking of such a thing, when you confess yourself ignorant of all the duties of a shepherd-boy!"

"They are very simple, and can easily be learned, I should think," said Bladud.

"Ay," replied Math, "or you had not seen them practised by so simple a lad as Math, the son of Goff. But as all learners must have a beginning, I would not have you aspire at first to a higher office than that of a swineherd's boy; for remember, as no one knows who you are, or whence you come, you must not expect to obtain much notice from those who are the possessors of flocks and herds."

Bladud sighed deeply at this remark; but as he felt the truth of what Math said, he did not evince any displeasure at his plain speaking. He, therefore, mildly requested Math to recommend him to some master who would give him employment.

Math happened to know an aged swineherd who was in want of a lad of Bladud's age to attend on his pigs. He accordingly introduced his new friend, Bladud, as a candidate for that office; and his mild and sedate manners so well pleased the old man, that he immediately took him into his service.

Bladud at first felt the change of his fortunes very keenly, for he had been delicately fed and nurtured, and surrounded by friends, servants,

and busy flatterers. He was now far separated from all who knew and loved him; exposed to wind and weather, heat and cold, and compelled to endure every species of hardship. He had no other bed than straw or rushes; his food was far worse than that which is now eaten by the poorest peasants, who deem their lot so hard; and he was clothed in undressed sheep-skins, from which the wool had been shorn. His drink was only water from the brook, and his whole time was occupied in his attendance on the swine.

At the earliest peep of dawn he was forced to rise, and lead forth into the fields and woods a numerous herd of grunting swine in quest of food, and there to remain till the shades of evening compelled him to drive them to the shelter of the rude sheds built for their accommodation, round the wretched hovel wherein their master dwelt. Bladud was sure to return weary and hungry, and often wet and sorrowful, to his forlorn home. Yet he did not murmur, though suffering at the same time under a most painful, and, as he supposed, an incurable disease.

He endeavoured to bear the hardships of his lot with patience, and he derived satisfaction from the faithful performance of the duties which he had undertaken, irksome as they were. The greatest pain he endured, next to his separation from his parents, was the discovery that several of his master's pigs were infected with the same loathsome disease under which he was labouring; and this he feared would draw down upon him the displeasure of the old herdsman.

But the leprosy, and its contagious nature, were evils unknown to the herdsmen of Cayns-ham, or Bladud would never have been able to obtain employment there. His master was

an aged man, nearly blind, who, being convinced of the faithful disposition of his careful attendant, left the swine entirely to his management; so the circumstance of several of the most valuable of them being infected with leprosy, was never suspected by him. Bladud continued to lead them into the fields and forests in quest of their daily food, without incurring either question or reproach from him, or, indeed, from any one, for it was a thinly-inhabited district, and there were no gossiping neighbours to bring the tale of trouble to the old herdsman.

But though Bladud's misfortune remained undetected, he was seriously unhappy, for he felt himself to be the innocent cause of bringing the infection of a sore disease among his master's swine. He would have revealed the whole matter to him, only that he feared the evil could not now be cured.

From day to day he led his herd deeper into the forests, and further a-field; for he wished to escape the observation of every eye. Sometimes, indeed, he did not bring them back to the herdsman's enclosure above once in a week. In the mean time he slept at night, surrounded by his uncouth companions, under the shade of some wide-spreading oak of the forest, living like them, upon acorns, or the roots of the pig-nuts, which grew in the woods and marshes, and were, when roasted, sweet and mealy, like potatoes, with the flavour of the chestnut. These were dainties in comparison to the coarse black unleavened cakes on which poor Bladud had been used to feed ever since his unhappy banishment.

The old herdsman was perfectly satisfied with Bladud's management of the swine, and glad to find that he took the trouble of leading them into

fresh districts for change of food, of which swine are always desirous.

So Bladud continued to penetrate into new and untrodden solitudes with his grunting charge, till one day he saw the bright waters of the river Avon sparkling before him in the early beams of the morning sun. He felt a sudden desire of crossing this pleasant stream. It was the fruitful season of Autumn, and the reddening acorns, with which the rich oaken groves that crowned the noble hills on the opposite side were laden, promised an abundant feast for his master's swine, of whose wants he was always mindful.

He would not, however, venture to lead them across the river without first returning to acquaint his master, for he had already been abroad more than a week. So he journeyed homewards, and reached his master's hovel, with his whole herd, in safety. He then reported to the good old man, that he had wandered to the side of a beautiful river, and beheld from its grassy banks a rich and smiling country, wherein, he doubted not, that the swine would find food of the best kind, and in great abundance. "Prithee, master," quoth he, "suffer me to drive the herd across that fair stream, and if aught amiss befall them, it shall not be for want of due care and caution on the part of your faithful boy."

"Thou art free to lead the herd across the fair stream of which thou speakest, my son," replied the herdsman, "and may the blessing of an old man go with them and thee; for surely thou hast been faithful and wise in all thy doings since thou hast been my servant."

That very day he set out once more to the shores of the silvery Avon, and crossed it with the delighted pigs, at a shallow spot, which has

ever since, in memory thereof, been called Swinford, or Swine's-ford.

No sooner, however, had they reached the opposite shore, than the whole herd set off, galloping and scampering, one over the other, as if they had one and all been seized with a sudden frenzy. No less alarmed than astonished at their sudden flight, Bladud followed them at his quickest speed, and beheld them rapidly descending into a valley, towards some springs of water, that seemed to ooze out of the boggy land in its bottom, amidst rushes, weeds, and long rank grass. Into this swamp the pigs rushed headlong, and here they rolled and revelled, tumbling, grunting, and squeaking, and knocking each other head over heels, with evident delight, but to the utter astonishment of Bladud, who was altogether unconscious of the instinct by which the gratified animals had been impelled.

All the attempts which Bladud made to drive or entice them from the spot were entirely useless. They continued to wallow in their miry bed, until at length the calls of hunger induced them to seek the woods for food; but after they had eaten a hearty meal of acorns, they returned to the swamp, to the increasing surprise of Bladud. As for his part, having taken a supper of coarse black bread and roasted acorns, he sought shelter for the night in the thick branches of a large oak-tree.

Now poor Bladud was not aware that, guided by superior Wisdom, he had, unknown to himself, approached a spot wherein there existed a remarkable natural peculiarity. This was no other than some warm springs of salt water, which ooze out of the earth, and possess certain medicinal properties which have the effect of

curing various diseases, and on which account they are sought by afflicted persons even to the present day.

CHAPTER III.

BLADUD BATHES IN THE SPRINGS, AND IS CURED OF HIS LEPROSY.

—DISCLOSES HIS BIRTH TO HIS MASTER, WHOM HE INVITES TO ACCOMPANY HIM TO THE ROYAL CITY.—THEY ARRIVE THERE DURING THE FESTIVAL OF THE ACORN-GATHERING.—ARE FOLLOWED BY A PIG.—ANNOYED BY THE RABBLE.—MEET WITH MATH OF THE DOWNS.

BLADUD awoke with the first beams of morning, and discovered his grunting charge still actively wallowing in the oozy bed in which they had taken such unaccountable delight on the preceding day.

Bladud, however, who was accustomed to reason and to reflect on everything he saw, had often observed that the natural instinct of animals prompted them to do such things as were most beneficial to them. He had noticed that cats and dogs, when sick, had recourse to certain herbs and grasses, which proved effectual remedies for the malady under which they laboured; and he thought it possible that pigs might be endowed with a similar faculty of discovering an antidote for disease. At all events he resolved to watch the result of their revellings in the warm ooze bath, wherein they continued to wallow, between whiles, for several days.

The wisdom of this proceeding was shortly manifested; for Bladud soon observed that a gradual improvement was taking place in the appearance of the swine.

The leprous scales fell off by degrees, and in the course of a few weeks the leprosy gradually disappeared, and the whole herd being cleansed, was restored to a sound and healthy state.

The heart of the outcast prince was buoyant with hope and joy when the idea first presented itself to his mind, that the same simple remedy which had restored the infected swine might be equally efficacious in his own case. Divesting himself of his humble clothing and elate with joy and hope, he plunged into the warm salt ooze bed, wherein his pigs had revelled with so much advantage.

He was soon sensible of an abatement of the irritable and painful symptoms of his loathsome malady; and, in a short time, by persevering in the use of the remedy which the natural sagacity of his humble companions had suggested, he became wholly cured of the leprosy, and was delighted to find himself restored to health and vigour.

With a heart overflowing with gratitude, Bladud returned thanks to that merciful Providence whereby he had been led, through hardships and sorrows, to discover this simple but certain remedy for a distemper which the most skilful physicians of his father's court had pronounced incurable. He knelt down upon the flowery banks of the smooth-flowing Avon, and poured forth his thankfulness to the Divine Source of all the blessings and mercies which are dispensed to the children of men; and most fervently did the grateful boy acknowledge the goodness of his Heavenly Father, in having healed his sore disease, and restored him to health and comfort.

After bathing, and washing away in the river the stains of the ooze, he first beheld the reflec-

tion of his own features in the clear mirror of the stream. He perceived that his skin, which had been so lately disfigured by foul blotches and frightful scales, so as to render him an object of abhorrence to his nearest and dearest friends, was now smooth, fair, and clear.

"Oh, my mother!" he exclaimed, in the overpowering rapture of his feelings on this discovery, "I may then hope to behold thy face once more! and thou wilt no longer shrink from the embrace of thy son, as in the sad, sad hour of our sorrowful parting!"

He pressed the agate ring, which she had given him as her farewell token of remembrance, to his lips and to his bosom, as he spoke; then quitting the water, he once more arrayed himself in the miserable garb of his lowly fortunes, and guided his master's herd homeward.

The old man, who was beginning to grow uneasy at the unwonted length of Bladud's absence, and fearing that some accident had befallen the swine, was about to set forth in search of him, when he heard the approach of the noisy herd, and perceived Bladud advancing towards him.

"Is all well with thyself and with the herd, my son?" inquired the old man.

"All is well, my father," replied Bladud, bowing himself before his lowly master; "yea, more than well; for the blessing of the great Disposer of all that befallerth the children of men, hath been with me. I left you as a poor destitute, afflicted with a sore disease, that had rendered me loathsome to my own house, and despised and shunned by all men. I was driven forth from the dwellings of health and gladness, and forced to seek shelter in the wilderness. From being the son of a king, I was reduced to become the

servant of one of the humblest of his subjects, and esteemed myself fortunate in obtaining the care of a herd of swine, that I might obtain even a morsel of coarse food, and a place wherein to lay my head at night. But, behold, through this very thing have I been healed of my leprosy!"

"And who art thou, my son?" demanded the old herdsman, in whose ears the words of his youthful servant sounded like the language of a dream.

"I am Bladud, the son of Lud Hurdebras, thy king," replied the youth. "Up—let us be going, for the time seemeth long to me, till I once more look upon his face, and that of the queen my mother."

"Thou hast never yet in aught deceived me, my son," observed the herdsman, "else should I say thou wert mocking me with some wild fable; so passing all belief doth it seem, that the son of my lord the king should have been contented to dwell with so poor and humble a man as myself in the capacity of a servant."

"In truth, the trial was a hard one," replied Bladud; "but I knew that it was my duty to submit to the direction of that heavenly Guardian who has thus shaped my lot after his good pleasure; and now do I perceive that it was in love and mercy, as well as in wisdom, that I have been afflicted." Bladud then proposed to his master that he should accompany him to his father's court; to which the old herdsman, who scarcely yet credited the assertion of his young attendant, at length consented; and they journeyed together to the royal city.

In these days, many a mean village is in appearance a more important place than were the royal cities wherein the ancient British kings kept

court; for these were merely large straggling enclosures, surrounded with trenches and hedges, containing a few groups of wattled huts, plastered over with clay. The huts were built round the king's palace, which was not itself a more commodious building than a modern barn, and having neither chimneys nor glazed windows, must have been but a miserable abode in the winter season.

At the period to which our story has now conducted us, it was, however, a fine warm Autumn day. King Hurdebras and his queen were therefore dwelling in an open pavilion, formed of the trunks of trees, which were covered over with boughs, and garlanded with wreaths of wild flowers.

Bladud and his master arrived during the celebration of a great festival, held to commemorate the acorn-gathering, which was then completed. All ranks and conditions of people were assembled in their holiday attire, which varied from simple sheep-skins to the fur of wolves, cats, and rabbits. By some persons of high rank, the fur or wool was worn inside, while the smooth sides of the skins were dressed and curiously stained with the juice of the *woad*, a plant greatly prized among the ancient Britons on account of a fine blue dye which was obtained from it. With this colour, it was the custom of the ancient Britons to paint not only their garments, but also their faces and bodies, in stripes and stars, and various other figures. The effect of the painting was very similar to that of *tattooing*, which prevails among the savages of the South Sea Islands; and, indeed, in various other respects, there was a great similarity in many of the customs of the original inhabitants of Britain to those of the islanders dis-

covered in modern times in the South Atlantic regions.

Among all this concourse of people, Bladud was remarked for the poverty of his garments, which were of the rude fashion and coarse material of those of the humblest peasant. As for the old herdsman, his master, when he observed the little respect with which Bladud was treated by the rude crowds who were thronging to the royal city, he began to suspect either that the youth himself had been deluded by some strange dream respecting his royal birth and breeding, or that for knavish purposes he had practised on his credulity, in inducing him to undertake so long a journey.

These reflections put the old man into an ill humour, which was greatly increased when, on entering the city, he became an object of boisterous mirth and rude jest to the populace. On endeavouring to ascertain the cause of this annoyance, he discovered that one of his most valuable pigs, that had formed a very powerful attachment to Prince Bladud, had followed them on their journey, and was now grunting at their very heels.

The herdsman's anger at length broke out in words, and he bitterly upbraided Bladud for having beguiled him into such a wild-goose expedition. "And, as if that were not enough," quoth he, "thou couldst not be contented without bringing thy pet pig hither, to make a fool both of thyself and me. Why verily, we are the laughing-stock of the whole city."

Bladud mildly assured his master that it was through no act of his that the pig had followed them to his father's court.

"Thy father's court, forsooth!" retorted the old man, angrily; "I do verily believe it is all a trick which thou hast cunningly planned, for the sake

of stealing my best pig. Else why shouldst thou have permitted it to follow thee thither?"

Bladud was prevented from replying to this unjust accusation by a rabble of rude boys, who had gathered round them, and began to assail the poor pig with sticks and stones. Bladud at first mildly requested them to desist from such cruel sport; but finding they paid no attention to his remonstrances, he began to deal out blows, right and left, with his stout quarter-staff, by which he kept the foremost at bay, calling at the same time on his master to assist him in defending the pig.

But Bladud and his master together were very unequally matched against this lawless band of young aggressors. They certainly would have been very roughly handled, had it not been for the unexpected aid of a shepherd-lad who came to their assistance, and, with the help of his faithful dog, succeeded in driving away the most troublesome of their assailants.

In this brave and generous ally, Bladud had the satisfaction of discovering his old friend Math of the Downs. So completely, however, was Bladud's appearance changed in consequence of his being cleansed of the leprosy, that it was sometime before he could convince Math that he was the wretched and forlorn outcast with whom he had changed clothes, nearly a twelvemonth before, on the Somersetshire Downs.

Math, however, presently remembered his old clothes, in the sorry remains of which Bladud was still dressed; and Bladud also pointed with a smile to the painted vest of a British prince, in which the young shepherd had arrayed himself to attend the festival of the acorn-gathering. Strange to say, the generous boy had altogether

escaped infection from the clothes of his diseased prince !

Bladud now briefly explained his situation to the astonished Math, whom he invited to join himself and his master in their visit to the royal pavilion, in order that he might be a witness of his restoration to the arms of his parents, and the honours of his father's court.

Math, though still more incredulous than even the old herdsman, was strongly moved by curiosity to witness the interview. He stoutly assisted Bladud in making his way through the crowd, who appeared resolutely bent on impeding their progress to the royal pavilion, which, however, they at length approached, still followed by the persevering pig.

CHAPTER IV.

FESTIVAL OF THE ACORN-GATHERING.—BLADUD DROPS THE RING INTO HIS MOTHER'S CUP, AND MAKES HIMSELF KNOWN.—IS RESTORED TO HIS PRINCELY RANK.—TRAVELS INTO GREECE.—SUCCEEDS HIS FATHER AS KING.—FOUNDS A CITY ADJACENT TO THE SPRINGS.—MAKES WINGS, AND ATTEMPTS TO FLY.—IS KILLED IN THE ATTEMPT.

THE last load of acorns, adorned with the faded branches of the noble oak, and crowned with the mistletoe, a plant which the Druids taught the ancient Britons to hold in superstitious reverence, was now borne into the city, preceded by a band of Druids in their long white robes, and a company of minstrels, singing songs, and dancing before the wain. The king and queen came forth to meet the procession, and, after addressing suit-

able speeches to the Druids and the people, re-entered the pavilion, where they sat down to regale themselves.

Bladud, who had continued to press forward, now availed himself of an opportunity of entering the pavilion behind one of the queen's favourite ladies, whose office it was to fill her royal mistress' goblet with mead. This lady had been Bladud's nurse, which rendered her very dear to the queen, whom nothing could console for the loss of her son.

Bladud, concealed from observation by one of the rude pillars that supported the roof of the building, contemplated the scene in silence, which was broken only by the agitated beating of his swelling heart. He observed that the queen his mother looked sad and pale, and that she scarcely tasted of the cheer before her. She sighed deeply from time to time, and kept her eyes fixed on the vacant place which, in former happy days, used to be occupied by her only son!

King Hurdebras endeavoured to prevail upon her to partake of some of the dainties with which the board was spread.

"How can I partake of costly food," she replied, "when my only child is a wanderer on the face of the earth, and, perchance, lacketh bread?"

Bladud, unable longer to restrain the emotions under which he laboured, now softly stole from behind the pillar, and, unperceived, dropped the agate ring into his mother's goblet.

"Nay," replied the king, "but this is useless sorrow, my lady queen. Thinkest thou that I have borne the loss of our only son without grief and sorrow? Deeply have I also suffered; but we must not forget that it is our duty to bow with

humility to the wise decrees of the great Disposer of all human events?"

"But canst thou feel our loss in like degree with me?" she exclaimed, bursting into tears; "what shall equal a mother's love, or the grief of her who sorroweth for her only one?"

"Fill high the goblet, Hetha," said the king, turning to the favourite of his royal consort; "and implore the queen thy mistress to taste of the sweet mead, and, for the happiness of those around her, to subdue her sorrow."

The queen, after some persuasion, took the wine-cup, and raised it with a reluctant hand; but, ere the sparkling liquor reached her lips, she perceived the ring at the bottom of the goblet, and hastily pouring the mead upon the ground, seized the precious token, and holding it up, with a cry of joy, exclaimed, "My son! my son!"

Bladud sprang forward, and bowed his knee to the earth before her. "Hast thou forgotten me, oh! my mother?" he exclaimed in a faltering voice; for the queen, accustomed to see her princely son attired in robes befitting his royal birth, looked with a doubtful eye on the ragged garb of abject indigence in which the youth was arrayed. Moreover, he was sun-burnt and weather-beaten; had grown tall and robust; and was, withal, attended by his strange friend, the pig, who, in the untaught warmth of his affection, had intruded himself into the presence of royalty, in the train of his master.

A second glance convinced the queen, the king, and the delighted Hetha, that it was indeed the long-lost Bladud upon whom they looked; and it scarcely required the testimony of the old herdsman, his master, and that of his friend Math, the

shepherd, to certify the fact, and bear witness to the truth of his simple tale.

Touching was the scene when the king, recovering from the surprise into which the first shock of recognition had plunged him, rushed forward and clasped his long-lost son to his bosom. The big tear-drops rolled down his manly cheeks, and, relaxing the dignity of the king, and the sternness of the warrior, all the energies of his nature were embodied in the one single feeling, that he was a happy and a beloved father!

The news of the return of their prince spread throughout the assembled multitudes, on wings of joy. Loud and long were the shouts and acclamations which burst forth in every direction, as the distant groups became apprized of the event. The Druids and the Minstrels formed themselves into processions, in which the people joined; and the harpers, sounding their loudest strains, struck up their songs of joy and triumph. The oxen, loosened from the wains, and decked with garlands of flowers, were led forward in the train; and the dancers and revellers followed, performing with energy and delight their rude sports and pastimes around the king's pavilion.

Night at length closed upon the happy scene, and the king and queen retired to their tent, accompanied by their son, to learn from his lips the course of events by which his life had been preserved, and his health restored. They joined in humble thanks to the Great Author of all happiness, for the special blessings that had been bestowed upon them; and the king marked his sense of gratitude by gifts and benefits extended to the helpless and the deserving among his subjects. The good old herdsman was among the most favoured, and the worthy Math was put in a path of

honour and promotion, of which he proved himself well deserving.

Prince Bladud, desirous of improving himself, by learning the manners and customs of other nations, obtained of the king his father leave to travel into Greece, where he acquired a great deal of learning, and much knowledge of various people, and of the arts of civil life. These he afterwards employed for the benefit of the people of his own country, whom he is said to have greatly civilized.

When he succeeded to his father's throne, he founded a city near the healing springs from which he had derived the blessing of a restoration to health. The place continued to grow in extent and importance, and the noble city of Bath now occupies its site. The springs have been carefully protected, and conducted into magnificent baths, which, even to the present day, are frequented, on account of their healing qualities, by people from all parts, not only of this country, but also from various nations. The springs are four in number; and are efficacious in the cure, not only of leprosy, but of many other diseases, such as gout, rheumatism, and eruptive complaints. Hence it was that our Saxon ancestors changed the name of the place, which was at first called *Kaerbadus*, to *Ake-man's-Ceaster*, or the City of the Sick Man, on account of the number of invalids who came to seek a cure for their maladies by bathing in the warm springs, or drinking of the mineral waters.

When Bladud became king, he introduced certain arts and sciences among his subjects. He was devoted to the study of astronomy, and built a high tower for an observatory, which he called the Tower of Apollo.

Weakness and vanity, however, at length led

him on to his destruction; for, in the pride of his supposed knowledge, he was so silly as to construct for himself a pair of wings, and to attempt to fly from the top of this lofty tower. As might, of course, have been expected, he fell to the earth, and was dashed to pieces.

He had reigned many years over Britain, and is said to have been the father of King Lear, whose sad story forms the subject of a beautiful tragedy by our great poet Shakspeare.

THE SLAVE OF AUVERGNE.

A TALE OF THE ANCIENT CHRISTIANS, THE FRANKS, AND
THE VISI-GOTHS.

CHAPTER I.

GREGORY, COUNT OF AUTUN, BECOMES CHRISTIAN BISHOP OF
LANGRES.—HIS GRANDSON ATTALUS.—AUVERGNE CONQUERED
BY THE ROMANS.—TRANSFERRED TO THE VISI-GOTHS, AND
FROM THEM CONQUERED BY THE FRANKS.—KING THEODORIC
—TREACHERY OF HIS BROTHER CHILDERBERT.—ATTALUS DE-
LIVERED AS A HOSTAGE, AND CARRIED TO METZ.

IN the days of Clovis, King of the Franks, lived the valiant Gregory, Count of Autun, one of the richest and most powerful nobles of the fair province of Auvergne. This count—though born in the middle of the fifth century, when the greatest part of Europe was in a state of barbarism, and many of its inhabitants were idolaters or misbelievers—was one of the best, the most learned, and the most pious persons of his time. So earnest was his desire to extend the progress of Christianity, that, on the death of his wife, he gave up his titles and estates to his son, and became bishop of Langres, in order that he might devote his whole time to the service of God, and the instruction of the poor.

This bishop of Langres had one only grandson named Attalus, the heir of his eldest son, to whom he had resigned the estates and honours

THE SLAVE OF AUVERGNE.



Attalus and his Grandfather.



Attalus and Leo relieved by a Christian.

of Autun. The education of his grandson formed Gregory's greatest pleasure, for Attalus was docile, amiable, and studious, and gratefully repaid the venerable bishop's love and care, by his dutiful attention and affectionate regard.

Auvergne had remained a Roman colony, long after the decay of the imperial power of Rome itself had permitted the other provinces of Gaul, as France was anciently called, to throw off the yoke of their mighty conquerors. The people of Auvergne had, in the first instance, opposed a most determined resistance to the Roman invaders—and they even boasted of being in possession of the sword of Julius Cæsar himself, which he had lost when repulsed before the walls of Gergovia. But when, at length, they allowed themselves to be reckoned as Roman subjects, they became such in reality, and thereby reaped the benefits of civilization: for they imitated their Roman conquerors in all things wherein they knew them to be superior to themselves. The learning, the refinement, and the useful arts, which the Romans had introduced into Auvergne, continued to flourish there, even when their feeble emperor, Julius Nepos, basely transferred that province to the leader of the Visi-Goths, (which means the Western Goths,) in order to purchase for himself an inglorious peace.

Christianity had been early introduced into Auvergne, and, aided by other causes, had preserved the people from relapsing, like their neighbours, into barbarism. But Christianity and civilization go hand in hand—for it not only points out the true path to everlasting happiness, but also fits its believers for a better state of existence. It purifies them from the gross

ideas of ignorant savages, and leads them to sublime and beautiful contemplations; to the knowledge of God, the love of virtue, and the practice of universal benevolence. This is true civilization.

The manners and characters of the fierce Visi-Goths, when they, in their turn, became masters of Auvergne, were ameliorated by the example of the people over whom they ruled. The Christian people of Auvergne became the instructors of their new masters, and were the means of imparting to many among them the spiritual blessings which they themselves enjoyed.

Auvergne, however, did not continue very long under the yoke of the Visi-Goths; for their chief, Alaric the Second, with many of his princes, was slain in battle by Clovis, King of the Franks, in the year 507. The victor then offered peace to the people of the land, with the full enjoyment of their religion, on condition of their transferring their homage to him—and they accordingly consented to become his subjects.

On the death of Clovis, which happened in the year 511, his dominions were divided among his four sons. Auvergne became the property of Theodoric, the eldest, who had inherited the dominions of the Franks, situated in the lower circle of the Rhine, and called by ancient historians, Austrasia. Theodoric is called the King of Metz, because that city was his capital.

Childerbert, his younger brother, was King of Paris, and he cast a greedy eye on the fair province of Auvergne, which was situated in the immediate neighbourhood of his territories. While Theodoric was absent in his wars with Burgundy, Childerbert falsely circulated a report

of his brother's death, and thus persuaded the people of Auvergne to accept him for their sovereign, as the successor of his elder brother. To this, without suspicion of the fraud which Childerbert had practised, they consented, supposing that their lawful king, Theodoric, had been slain by the fierce Burgundians. But when Theodoric was informed that they had sworn allegiance to his younger brother, he was transported with fury, and declared that he would inflict a severe punishment upon the traitors of Auvergne, as he unreasonably called them.

His chiefs threatened to desert his standard, if, for the sake of inflicting vengeance on his mistaken subjects of Auvergne, he neglected to carry on the war in which he was engaged with Burgundy. But Theodoric addressed himself to his barbarous Franks of Austrasia, who were for the most part ferocious Pagans, and who fought, not for the love of their country or their king, but for the sake of plunder, and, therefore, listened with pleasure to the following exhortation from their royal leader:

"Follow me into Auvergne—a province which abounds with luxurious produce—a land of vineyards and of cattle! I will give to you the people of the land, and their wealth: dispose of them as you will, and win for yourselves gold and silver, jewels and precious apparel. You may take the rich lands and the fair palaces into your own possession; you may use the people for your servants, yea, and you may transport them into your own country, if it so please you, for to you I resign them as a prize due to their conquerors."

The barbarous Franks raised loud shouts of exultation at these words, and at once agreed to fol

low their cruel master into the devoted province of Auvergne.

When the inhabitants were informed of the vindictive intentions of Theodoric, they prepared to defend themselves, and this they did so bravely, that the king, finding himself unable to execute his malice against them, thought proper to come to an accommodation with them. In this he agreed to leave them in possession of their lives and properties, but on condition that they should give hostages for their future loyalty.

In the barbarous days in which all this happened, treaties and truces were so frequently violated, that it was usual for pledges of this kind to be required by the stronger party.

The men of Auvergne were unable to resist their sovereign's demand. A band of noble youths, the sons of their principal senators, was accordingly selected by the Frankish monarch, for the purpose of being carried by him to Metz, there to be kept as sureties of the fealty of their parents to his person and government. Among these hostages, young Attalus, the heir of the Count of Autun, and the grandson of Gregory, Bishop of Langres, was chosen by Theodoric; his high rank and distinguished beauty having marked him out to the semi-barbarous sovereign of the Franks as one peculiarly fitted to be placed among the devoted train. I say, the devoted train—for, although the persons of hostages were, by the law of nations, considered as sacred, and the parties who received them pledged to treat them with the greatest consideration and kindness, the pledge was only binding so long as the conditions of the peace were faithfully observed by those by whom the hostages were delivered. If but the slightest infraction of a single article of the treaty

took place, or either of the hostages attempted to escape, then they were liable to be slain, or to be sold for slaves, or, at any rate, to be loaded with fetters, and thrown into deep dark dungeons.

These dreadful contingencies were sternly enumerated by the tyrant of Austrasia to the assembled nobles of Auvergne, after they had resigned their sons and dearest relatives into his hands.

Pointing to the youthful band, who, with tearful eyes, stood at his left hand, looking with silent, yet eloquent grief, upon the weeping parents whom they probably beheld for the last time, he said—"Nobles and senators of Auvergne, the fate of your sons is in your own hands: on your conduct, as subjects, it depends whether I treat them as my children, or as my slaves. If you are loyal to me, I will be loving to them; but if, in the slightest thing, you dare to oppose my will, or to league with my false brother Childerbert against me, then will I treat those dear and precious objects of your love, and the hopeful heirs of your proud houses, as if they were the captives of my bow and spear; *they* shall bear the penalty of *your* offences."

There was a low murmur of indignation among the nobles of Auvergne at these words; but they dared not openly expostulate with the haughty tyrant in whose hands they had in an evil hour placed their beloved children. They felt that they were in his power, and all they could do was to commend their departing sons to his care and compassion, when they bade an agonizing farewell to those precious ones, whom they had too much reason to fear they should see no more.

The grief of the venerable Bishop of Langres, at beholding his cherished grandchild and hopeful pupil, Attalus, torn from him by the relentless

tyrant of Austrasia, was perhaps more poignant than that of any of the mothers of Auvergne, on parting with their fair sons. He contemplated with painful anxiety the evil consequences that might result from a youth of his tender age being removed into a heathen land, where he would be beset with the snares of Satan on every side; where, too, he would be called upon to renounce the Lord of Glory, who created and redeemed him, and to bow down to senseless stocks and stones, the representations of the demon-gods whom the majority of the Franks still served.

"But," said Attalus, in reply to the apprehensions which his grandfather had expressed on this subject, "the King of Austrasia is a Christian, I am told."

"Nay, my child," replied the Bishop, "profane not the name of a Christian, by bestowing it upon a man of blood and violence, who liveth in open violation of all his Christian vows. I tell thee, Attalus, that Theodoric acts as much like a heathen as the blindest of his idolatrous subjects; but there is this difference in their outward practice—the ignorant Franks still offer incense to shapes of wood and stone, while their monarch bows down in a Christian church, without yielding either love or obedience to the God whom he affects to adore. In doing this, Theodoric acts the part of a hypocrite, and sins against the truth in which he was instructed by his pious mother, the Queen Clotilda. But thou, my Attalus, follow not after his steps; but let thy whole life be in conformity with the profession of that holy faith wherein thou hast been so carefully brought up."

Attalus promised obedience to the exhortations of his venerable grandfather, from whom he was shortly after separated by the order of Theodoric

He had previously bidden his father, the Count of Autun, a long farewell, which, sad as it was, would have been far more sad, had he known that it was a final one. The count died soon after the departure of his son, with the other hostages, from the city of Metz.

CHAPTER II.

ATTALUS ARRIVES AT METZ.—BARBAROUS MANNERS OF THE FRANKS.—PERSECUTION OF ATTALUS.—OPPRESSION OF THEODORIC, AND CONSPIRACY AT AUVERGNE.—CRUEL CONDUCT OF THE KING.—ATTALUS SOLD FOR A SLAVE.—CONVEYED TO THE CASTLE OF DAGOBERT.—HIS PERSECUTIONS AND SUFFERINGS THERE.—HIS CONDUCT UNDER AFFLICTION.

ATTALUS found things very different at Metz from what he had been accustomed to in the Christian province of Auvergne. The houses, indeed, abounded with silver and gold, and splendid furniture, the spoils of other nations, which had been torn from their lawful owners, by the robber Franks; but there was but little to promote the comforts and conveniences of life, of which this barbarous people had no idea. Neither learning nor the arts had any place among them: all they thought of was eating, drinking, riot, and excess of every kind. Their manners were rude and uncourteous; scarcely one of their feasts passed off without quarrels, at which swords were drawn and blood shed, even in the king's presence; and, in a word, the Austrasian Franks were heathens in principle and in practice.

The young hostages were at first lodged in the palace of the king, and shared with the sons of

the Frankish nobles the honour of waiting upon him at his meals. They also carried his weapons when he went abroad, and attended him at church, where the conduct of Theodoric gave Attalus frequent opportunities of remembering the observations of his grandfather, the Bishop of Langres. The service was hastily hurried over, without due regard to Christian order or Christian holiness; and the Frankish chiefs conversed irreverently, or played with their weapons and the ornaments of their dress, instead of joining in the devotions of such of the congregation as appeared to consider themselves in the temple of God.

Before the concluding benediction was well ended, both king and people hastened from the cathedral, and consumed the rest of the Sabbath in barbaric dances and ribald sports. There was, indeed, but little difference, as the Bishop of Langres had said, except in name between the baptized sovereign and his Pagan subjects.

Many attempts were made by the young Franks to render the Christian hostages of Auvergne as wicked and as regardless of the displeasure of God as they themselves were. In some instances their mockeries and seductions prevailed; but on Attalus temptations, ridicule, and threats, were alike tried in vain, both by the heathen youth of the court of Metz, and the weak-minded among his own countrymen, who, having yielded to evil counsel and evil inclinations, wished to make him a companion in their guilt.

It was not by his own strength that Attalus was enabled to stand, when several who were his elders, and apparently of a sterner disposition than himself, fell. It was through the grace of God, to whose protection he commended himself daily, that he was supported through every trial, and

manfully resisted the snares with which he was beset in the infidel city of Metz.

Meantime, the tyrannical dominion of the Franks, and the enormous taxes which they exacted, became unbearable to the people of Auvergne. They began to feel, that even the loss of their twelve youthful hostages would be a less misfortune to the country than the state of misery to which they were reduced by the foreign tyrant, who had treated them with the arrogance of a conqueror, instead of the paternal kindness of a sovereign. In spite, therefore, of the entreaties of those whose sons had been given up as pledges of their fealty to the King of the Franks, some of the chief men entered into a conspiracy to free their country from the yoke of the oppressor.

When Theodoric heard this, he not only took active measures for defeating their project, but immediately sold all the young hostages as slaves to his ferocious nobles. It was the hard lot of Attalus to fall into the hands of an old heathen chief, named Dagobert, who stripped the noble youth of the rich ornaments and costly robes which he had heretofore been accustomed to wear, and having arrayed him in the coarsest garments, put an iron collar about his neck, on which was engraved, "Attalus, of Autun, the slave of Dagobert, the lord of Gurm." He then carried him away into the wild desolate country of Treves, where his hideous old castle was situated, in the midst of a chain of barren hills; a situation where the air was cold enough to chill the very marrow in people's bones, and nothing would grow except a little stunted prickly underwood.

When Attalus, who was fastened by a leathern thong to his master's stirrup, to prevent his making his escape, first beheld this dismal place, his heart

seemed to die within him. How different was the scene from the prospect of his own fair land of Auvergne! There the bright sparkling Aube flowed through plains of emerald verdure, and the inexhaustible fertility of the rich arable soil supplied perpetual harvests; there the southern hills were wreathed with clustering vines, and clothed with flowers and lovely foliage; and there the undulating landscape was studded with marble villas, built after the Roman order of architecture.

With the thoughts of his country, too, came tender remembrances of his beloved parent, his venerable grandsire, and all the sweet and pleasant ties of kindred, of friends, and of home. The feelings of the tender-hearted boy were at length overcome by the weight of his afflictions, and the heart-sick exile paused and wept.

"Slave, wherefore dost thou tarry?" growled the harsh voice of Dagobert.

"I am no slave, but a free-born Christian, the heir of the noble Count of Autun!" said Attalus; "I have never before been treated like a dog; and I will go no further."

"Thou wilt not?" replied Dagobert; "then must I teach thee that thou art my slave, and that thy duty is obedience!" He accompanied these words with severe blows, and poor Attalus being chained to his stirrup, was compelled to proceed, though his shoes were worn, and his feet, lacerated by the rocky paths he had traversed, bled at every step.

When they came to the castle-gate, a number of wretched slaves and half-naked servants came out to receive their lord, together with a company of men-at-arms, with large battle-axes stuck in their girdles. Their long braided locks of hair

dangled over their ears, and they looked like a gang of ferocious robbers.

They welcomed Dagobert with savage cries of pleasure; for, now he had returned, they would be able to go forth, as usual, to commit all sorts of depredations on helpless travellers, to ravage the neighbouring country, and to pillage the flocks and herds of the peaceful inhabitants. It was thus that the warlike followers of the Frank chiefs got their living by spoil and violence, even in times of peace; and their lord's castle was a stronghold of wickedness, murder, and oppression.

Attalus shuddered when he entered the gloomy walls of Gurm, wherein he was condemned to become a hewer of wood and a drawer of water, among the servants and slaves of his barbarian master. He found neither kindness nor compassion from any one, but was treated with unfeeling derision. The whiteness of his hands, and the delicacy of his skin, which the Franks considered as proofs of effeminacy, were fruitful subjects of their rude mirth.

Dagobert had only one daughter, who was married to a barbarian chief, named Clodobert. This Clodobert was not a whit more amiable than the old heathen, his father-in-law; but having no inclination for fighting, he always staid at home, to take care of the castle, to till the barren lands of Gurm, and to fatten and sell the cattle, which his father-in-law and his rapacious followers carried off from the pastoral valleys in the neighbourhood, that were not protected by paying tribute to the Austrasian monarch.

Clodobert carried on a great trade in horses, for the mutual profit of his lordly father-in-law and himself. When, therefore, he found that the new slave, Attalus, was gentle and kind in his treat-

ment of animals, never teasing or playing tricks with them, like the other slaves and domestics of Dagobert, he took him into his favour, removed him from his servile occupation in the castle-yard, and employed him as the keeper of the horses in the barren pastures, at the foot of the mountainous eminence on which the castle of Gurm was situated.

Attalus infinitely preferred this service, where his duties were regularly and distinctly pointed out to him, to his first situation of drudge-general to every one who chose to call upon him, and impose some difficult, and perhaps impossible task. It had not unfrequently happened, that while he was doing one thing, other persons of the ill-ordered household reviled or beat him for not having done something else. Then there were half-a-dozen children of Clodobert and his heathen spouse—young barbarians, who combined the mischievous folly and restless vivacity of childhood with the cunning and wickedness of riper years, and ran wild about the castle, tormenting every one they came near. The mild and graceful captive of Auvergne was an especial object of their malignant sport; they pinched, bit, and scratched him, without remorse, pulled his long, dark ringlets, and followed him wherever he went, hanging on his garments, and calling him by insulting epithets of contempt.

It required all the firmness and Christian-like forbearance of Attalus, to restrain him from repelling with violence those malign imps. They only laughed at his remonstrances, and threatened him with their mother's vengeance, if he endeavoured to prevent them from committing the most dangerous acts of mischief, such as running about with lighted firebrands, setting on the

ferocious wolf-dogs to attack him, or piercing his flesh with their newly-shod arrows.

So intolerable did poor Attalus find these young barbarians, that the cheerless solitudes of the bleak plains, and the company of the horses, were to him a most blessed change. But his delicate frame was nipped by the cold east winds, and he suffered greatly from his exposure to the torrents of rain that frequently descended from the mountains, and a thousand other hardships, to which he, who was born the heir of greatness, and had been tenderly nurtured by fond parents, had never been accustomed.

Sadly did the forlorn captive miss the affectionate intercourse of friends and kindred; but above all did he lament the loss of Christian instruction, and the opportunity of joining in public worship. His private devotions were, at this time, his only solace. The desolate slave, though despised by men, could still hold communion with his God, and though his weary body was denied the privilege of Sabbath-rest, his spirit found refreshment in heavenward meditations, which taught him to submit, with patient meekness, to the hardships of his bitter bondage.

CHAPTER III.

WINTER APPROACHES, AND ATTALUS IS ORDERED BACK TO THE CASTLE WITH THE HORSES.—A SINGULAR ADVENTURE THERE.—LEO THE COOK.—TIDINGS FROM AUVERGNE.—DEATH OF THE COUNT OF AUTUN.—PLANS OF ESCAPE FROM SLAVERY.

AT length the wet season set in, with the approach of winter, and as it would be injurious for the horses to remain longer in the open pastures, orders were given for Attalus to lead them home to the castle-stables.

When he had safely housed and bedded them down, he proceeded to the castle-kitchen to receive his coarse repast. In his way, he was stopped in the outer-court, by a crowd of servants and men-at-arms, who were all congregated round their old heathen lord, Dagobert, listening with eager curiosity to a bargain he was driving with a Visi-Goth for a new slave. Actuated by feelings of sympathy for a fellow-creature, placed in the same painful and degrading circumstances as himself, Attalus approached the spot where the Visi-Goth was volubly extolling the various merits of his "good merchandise," as he called a tall, sprightly Italian peasant, whom he held by a leathern leash. "Behold, most puissant chief," said he, "this excellent slave is young, strong of limb, sound of health, and of a most engaging and submissive temper. He hath a passing good voice; can play well upon the cittern and lute; dances like a jackanapes, and makes grimaces which would enforce a horse to laugh outright; and, besides all these rare accomplishments, he is the best cook in all Christendom!"

"A good cook!" cried Dagobert, who, in addition to his other heathenish propensities, was a most prodigious glutton, and very difficult to please in culinary matters: "A good cook, saidst thou? It is the very thing of which I am always in quest, but never have the luck to meet with. Pray whom hath the fellow served in that capacity?"

"Oh, my lord," replied the Visi-Goth, "this slave is the very person you require. He can toss up stews that would delight the palate of an emperor; possesses matchless skill in roasting pigs and sheep, gridling fowls, and frying fish; he hashes up cold dishes till they are better than when they first came to table; makes spiced sauces, both sweet and savoury; can compound soups of beef and horse-flesh, both salt and fresh; dresseth herbs, salads, and vegetables, excellently; and is the best hand at pudding-ware and flummery that ever lived. When I tell you that he hath served in the capacity of head-cook to the Bishop of Langres, you will require no further proof of his merits."

Attalus was lost in astonishment at the conclusion of this pompous harangue, for his grandfather was one of the most temperate persons in the world, and seldom tasted more than one dish, and that very simply dressed. But the voice of the chapman was familiar to his ear, and he presently recognised him; he was an inhabitant of his grandfather's diocese, which was composed of a mixed population of Gauls and Visi-Goths, who, though anciently foes, had lived on terms of neighbourly good will together, since their conversion to Christianity.

As for the slave, whom the Visi-Goth was so earnestly recommending to the attention of Dago-

bert, he was certainly no other than his grandfather's cook, Leo, a very shrewd, clever fellow in his way. Attalus, however, much doubted whether he possessed a tenth part of the culinary skill and knowledge which the Visi-Goth had set forth in such elaborate terms. But how and in what manner Leo came to be at the disposal of the Visi-Goth, and why he was brought, apparently by no means loath, into the desolate hill-country of Treves, to be offered for sale to the barbarian lord of Gurm, was a perfect riddle to him.

He had, in the first instance, sprung forward with a natural emotion of surprise and pleasure at the sight of two familiar faces; but Leo gave him a sly sidelong look, which Attalus understood to intimate that he was not to betray any knowledge of them. He contented himself, therefore, with being a silent but watchful observer of the scene.

Dagobert rubbed his hands with great glee, when he heard that he had the opportunity of adding a bishop's cook to the slaves of his household. He had been told by the heathen Franks that prelates were especially fond of good living, and very particular in their cookery: so without any hesitation he paid down the price which the Visi-Goth demanded for his slave, though it was the enormous sum of twelve pieces of gold. Leo was forthwith conducted into the kitchen, and being duly installed in his culinary authority, was ordered to prepare a dinner fit for a bishop.

"You shall have one fit for the Pope himself, most mighty Dagobert!" replied Leo, with a profound obeisance. Skipping into the larder, with as familiar an air as if he had been a born servant of the castle, he set to work, attended by a crowd of kitchen-slaves, with saucepans, spits, ladles,

frying-pans and pipkins. In due time, he prepared twenty dishes of such daintily-seasoned ragoûts, fricassées, omelets, and stews, besides the usual train of roast and boiled meats, that the savoury smell from the castle-kitchen might almost be snuffed a mile off in the bleak mountain air. "It is enough," said Clodobert's eldest boy, "to make all hungry travellers, who pass this way, lick their lips, and crave for a taste of the good cheer."

Dagobert was delighted with the proof which his new cook had given of his skill. "Next Sunday," said he, "I shall invite my neighbours and kinsmen, yea, all the nobles of the border, to a sumptuous feast. Exert all thy skill in preparing the dishes, and force them to confess that they have never seen nor tasted such an entertainment, even in the royal palace of the King of Metz. Albeit our Sovereign lord Theodoric loveth good living as well as any man I know; but he cannot boast of a cook like Leo."

Leo assured his new lord that if he would only provide a sufficient quantity of the various sorts of fish, flesh, and fowl, with plenty of spices, garlic, and butter, he would satisfy him and astonish his guests. The proper ingredients for the feast were abundantly provided by Dagobert, who was a very ostentatious person; and as he had never before given a grand entertainment, he determined that this should be a most sumptuous one.

The guests were perfectly amazed at the splendour of the feast, which surpassed in the variety of savoury dishes, and relishing sauces, and exquisite sweets, anything that had ever been seen or heard of in the Austrasian dominions. So excessive were the commendations bestowed upon the cookery of these rich viands, that, as the art of cooking was considered a great accomplishment among

the barbarous Franks, Dagobert could not refrain from falsely boasting that he had compounded them himself, though all the hand he had in them was dipping his fingers in the gravies, and sops in the sauces. This he had done to the great annoyance of Leo, who expected that some of his best dishes would be upset into the fire by the old Pagan; for he had not patience enough to wait till they came to table before he tasted them, though he now thought proper to claim the honour of cooking the whole feast.

Dagobert was one of those persons who could not bear to hear any one commended but himself; therefore, if anything was admired, he always said, "It was done by me!" When it was positively known that he had not done it, he then said he had "suggested it!" While Dagobert was thus appropriating to himself the praises which the guests ought to have bestowed upon his cook, the captive Attalus had, for the first time, an opportunity of conversing with the new cook.

"Leo," said he, "what dost thou in this heathen land of Treves, cooking dinners for Dagobert the Frank?"

"Young sir," replied the cook, "I came hither to seek thee. My cooking is all for thy benefit," continued he, handing to Attalus a plate of the choicest ragoût, which he had subtracted from the feast for that purpose.

Attalus, though very hardly fed, refused to partake of the stolen dainties. He assured Leo that he was much more anxious to hear tidings of his venerable grandfather, of his father, and of his country, than to gratify his hunger.

Then Leo told him that his father was no more; that the King of Austrasia had seized upon the lands of Autun, his inheritance, to the great grief

of the Bishop of Langres, his grandfather; that the Bishop had suffered infinite sorrow and anxiety respecting his fate, when it was known that the King had behaved in so cruel a manner to the hostages of Auvergne; that the venerable prelate had been long doubtful whether he were dead or living; but that he had at length, with great difficulty, and after employing a variety of agents to search him out, discovered where he was. The Bishop had then sent a messenger to the lord of Gurm, to treat for his ransom; but the covetous barbarian, knowing the rank of his slave, had demanded the enormous sum of ten pounds of gold, as the price of his freedom.

Now the Bishop, being unable to command half that sum, had fallen sick with grief and despair. But, when the cause of his distress became known among his domestics, Leo, who was much attached to his lord, had offered to seek the young Count Attalus in his captivity, and to concert with him a scheme for his deliverance: "And rest assured, my dear young lord," said Leo, "that I shall soon cook up one to our mutual satisfaction."

Attalus was penetrated with gratitude at the generous devotion which his humble friend had evinced in his service. At that moment he had no words to express his feelings, for his heart was filled with sorrow for the death of his beloved father, whose loss he the more deeply bewailed, in a land of strangers and oppressors, since no one cared for his bereavement, or knew the worth and virtues of him whom he lamented.

The presence of the faithful Leo was, however, a real comfort to him during the long dreary winter. In order to avoid suspicion, they never conversed together, nor held the slightest intercourse, except when all the savage inmates of Gurm Castle

were buried in sleep. Leo was accustomed then to steal softly from his comfortable nook near the kitchen-fire, and creeping through a low back window, would come at night to the stable, where his young lord was lodged on straw, under one of the stalls. He would then relate to him all that had happened in the castle during the day, and endeavour to amuse and cheer him with lively stories. If Attalus were not disposed to mirth, then he would sit and listen to his tender recollections of home and his beloved relations in Auvergne, and talk to him of his grandfather.

The yearnings of the young exile after these became daily more urgent, and sometimes he besought Leo to engage with him in an attempt to escape from the state of irksome restraint in which he lived. To this request, Leo always replied, "Patience, young sir; the time is not yet come."

"Patience is good," would Attalus reply, "but hope deferred maketh the heart sick."

"There is a time for all things," rejoined Leo; "and when I have fully established myself in the favour of old Dagobert, and the confidence of Count Clodobert, his son-in-law, then may I safely venture to carry my project into execution. But this cannot be before the summer-season, for we may perish of hunger in the wild trackless forests, or be devoured by the ravenous wolves and bears, which, at this season, are bold, and attack those who journey on foot in small parties. If we escape these perils, then may we perchance die of the cold, sleeping, as peradventure we shall be forced to do, for successive nights, without a sheltering roof, in this inclement country."

"Ah, Leo," said Attalus, "you only conjure up difficulties and dangers which never may happen."

"I am a prudent person, my Lord Attalus," replied Leo, "and having pledged myself to my lord the Bishop of Langres, your honoured grandfather, to effect your deliverance from the hands of Dagobert the Frank, at mine own peril and risk, I am determined to cook mine own plans, and abide by mine own judgment, as to the time for carrying them into effect. If you choose to set forth on your travels through frost and snow, in a heathen land, where you know not one step of the way, I cannot prevent you; but you will not persuade me to leave my warm fire in the kitchen of Gurm Castle, to engage in any such rash doings, I promise you."

Attalus saw that it was useless to expect that a cook should possess the lofty spirit of a count; so he endeavoured to make himself as easy as he could during the winter season.

CHAPTER IV.

ATTALUS DISAPPOINTED IN AN EXPECTED JOURNEY TO METZ.—GOES OUT TO PLOUGH.—POPULARITY OF LEO.—THE HARVEST-HOME.—PLAN OF ESCAPE.—LICENTIOUSNESS OF THE FRANKS.—ATTALUS AND LEO FLY THE CASTLE.—PERILS IN THE WOOD.—ARRIVE AT THE HOUSE OF A CHRISTIAN PASTOR.—REACH HOME, AND ARE RESTORED TO THE BISHOP.—DEATH OF THE KING.—CONCLUSION.

WHEN spring-time came, Clodobert took all his fine horses, except a few which he reserved for Dagobert's use and his own, to Metz, and sold them for a large sum to the courtiers of King Theodoric. Attalus had vainly hoped that he should be employed to ride or lead one of these

noble animals to that city, intending, when he arrived at a convenient spot, to have put him to his speed, and so made off. Clodobert probably guessed his intention, for he would not permit him to attend the horses on this expedition, but gave orders that he should abide in the castle and take care of the children, and wait on his Lady Countess during his absence.

Attalus was deeply disappointed at this arrangement, and heartily sick of his new office, for the Lady Countess Marna, of Gurm, as she was called, was to the full as unamiable in her manners as her husband and her father; and as for the children, they grew more and more intolerable in their behaviour every day. Attalus was, therefore, very glad when Clodobert, on his return, sent him forth with some of his rustic barbarians to assist in ploughing the barren lands of Gurm, to prepare them for spring sowing. Even this hard labour was far more agreeable to Attalus than the company of such ill-mannered Pagans as Clodobert's countess and children.

At length summer approached, but Leo still delayed the execution of his project for the escape of Attalus, who sometimes began in his impatience to suspect that the vivacious cook had no serious intentions of aiding him to break his bonds. Leo, in fact, appeared thoroughly to enjoy his situation in the kitchen of Dagobert the Frank. He not only prepared all the meals with peculiar pains and infinite satisfaction, but, when not engaged in cooking, he delighted the Countess Marna, Count Clodobert, and their uncouth children, by dancing, singing, and playing a hundred droll antics, for their amusement. If the children were ever so troublesome, Leo found no fault with them. He had, indeed, conducted himself so

obligingly to every one, and thus obtained such influence in the castle, that nothing was done there without consulting him.

The fierce old Pagan, Dagobert, had hitherto led all his cooks a sad life; having cruelly beaten some, and ordered others into solitary confinement, on bread and water, if any of his favourite dishes were spoiled. But he was so fond of Leo, that he gave him rings for his fingers, and a gold chain for his neck, as a reward for having so completely tickled his palate; and he one day declared that he should be more concerned for his death than for the loss of all his family.

Count Clodobert carried his gluttony to a like excess. Indeed, he went far beyond his father-in-law in some things,—for, not contented with devouring four meals a day, he always had a rich buttered cake, and a bowl of strong drink, sweetened with honey, carried into his bed-chamber by Leo, in order that he might take it the last thing before he went to sleep. This bad practice made him grow so fat that he could hardly see out of his eyes, and reduced him to the necessity of walking on foot for the rest of his life: a great affliction to a man so fond of horses as he was. But from his great bulk, he was unable to mount or dismount, or to manage a horse with safety; and in those days coaches were not invented.

Attalus at length became indignant at seeing his grandfather's cook employing himself with such apparent satisfaction in pampering the appetites of these barbarians day after day, till months passed by, and the toils of harvest, in which he was compelled to assist, commenced. He had long been weary of importuning Leo to assist him in effecting his escape, for he had now concluded that Leo preferred the service of Dagobert, and

the privileges he enjoyed in his kitchen, to the peril of his difficult and dangerous enterprise.

On the evening of the harvest-home feast, however, when Attalus was engaged in turning the spit for Leo, the cautious cook, as he stooped to baste a pig that was roasting for Dagobert's own especial eating, whispered in his ear:—

“Hold thyself in readiness, Count Attalus; for this night, when all the intemperate inhabitants of the castle are overpowered with sleep, we two will flee from the heathen walls of Gurm!” The heart of Attalus leaped within him at this welcome intimation, and for the first time, he lent a cheerful hand in placing the savoury dishes on the loaded supper-board.

The two Counts, Dagobert and Clodobert, the Countess Marna, and her children, with all their barbarian guests, servants, and followers, ate like wolves, and drank like fishes. At the hour of midnight, they retired to their beds very much the worse for their intemperate indulgence at table.

When Leo attended Clodobert in his chamber with his accustomed potation, the pagan count, who was much intoxicated, said to him,—“We are all in thy power to-night, Leo, for I think thou art the only sober person in the castle. Verily, if thou wert not the most trustworthy fellow in the world, thou mightest rob and murder us all with impunity.”

“Nay,” replied Leo, “thou mayest trust me for that, good count; I have no temptation to do either of the things of which your lordship speaks.” With these words he withdrew, but carefully locked the door after him, and put the key in his pocket. He then softly entered the chamber where Dagobert was snoring in his bed,

and took away his spear and shield, and the key of the stable, which was under his head. When he left the room he locked this door also, and then proceeded to the stable, where Attalus had in the mean time saddled two of the fleetest horses, on which they both mounted, and started at fiery speed.

They rode on, without uttering a single word, save to encourage their steeds, throughout the dark, lonely night. When the morning dawned they found themselves on the banks of the river Moselle, beyond which they perceived a thick forest at a little distance.

"What shall we do now!" said Attalus; "for the banks are steep, and the stream is deep and rapid; our horses are wholly spent, and will not, I fear, be able to stem the tide."

"Let us abandon them," said Leo, "and swim to the opposite shore. We shall be able to shift for ourselves in the tangled forest better without them than with them."

None but a newly-enfranchised slave can tell the joy that Attalus felt, when he had swam through the rushing waters of the opposing stream, and gained the forest-glades in safety. He leaped and bounded with delight, exclaiming, "I am free; I shall behold my own fair land, and my beloved grandsire, once more."

"Softly, softly, my young lord," whispered the cautious Leo; "your chain is broken, it is true, but you are not yet out of danger; and, in sooth, I know not what is to become of us, for we have no clue to guide us out of this forest. I begin, too, to be in need of a breakfast, to recruit my spirits. Are you not hungry, good my lord?"

"I am free, and that sufficeth me," replied Attalus

Nevertheless the calls of hunger soon began to be felt by the high-souled youth as well as by his humble companion; and when they had roamed the tangled wildwood the whole day, and at last lay down to sleep, supperless, his jocund spirits were somewhat abated.

When they rose the next morning, they were not only faint with hunger, but much at a loss which way to proceed. However, they marched straight forward, trusting that if the wood had an end, they should in time reach it. Attalus kept his eye fixed, as it were, on the direct line they were to pursue; but Leo looked to right and left with eager glances; at length he clapped his hands together, in a sort of ecstasy, exclaiming, "Oh, blessed prospect!"

"Is it an outlet from this dismal forest, Leo, that you have discovered?" asked Attalus. "No; it is a wild plum-tree, loaded with purple fruit," replied Leo, springing into a tree that overhung their path, and giving it a hearty shake. Down came a fine shower of ripe plums, rather of a sour kind, it must be acknowledged; but never had the richest fruits of the sunny valleys of Auvergne appeared so refreshing as these crude wildings of the forest were to the parched lips of the faint and weary wanderers.

Scarcely, however, had they appeased their hunger, when the tramp of horses and the jingling of steel, close at hand, reached their ears, and they hastily concealed themselves in a dark thicket behind the plum-tree. While they lay there, trembling with apprehension, they recognised the harsh voice of old Dagobert, swearing in the most heathenish manner at his horse, for stumbling over the stump of a tree; and, peeping through the bushes, they plainly perceived him, with a

whole troop of his barbarian followers, beating the bushes apparently in search of them. They did not, however, search the thicket in which the fugitives were concealed, but they stopped under the wild plum-tree, and began to thresh down the fruit with their spears.

While so engaged, Clodobert's eldest boy, who was very active in the pursuit, asked his grandfather, "What he would do with Attalus and Leo, if he caught them?" The ferocious Pagan replied,—“I would hew Attalus to pieces with my battle-axe, and hang the false knave, Leo, on a gibbet, till the crows and the kites had picked his bones.”

Leo shuddered at this barbarous speech, and Attalus scarcely ventured to draw his breath! At length the blood-thirsty Franks, after bestowing a wicked execration on the sour plums, which, having tasted, they did not approve, turned their horses about, and struck into another track.

Attalus and Leo were glad enough to make a second meal on the despised plums, and to fill their pockets with them before they proceeded on their march. On the third day, they cleared the forest, and found themselves near the country of the Rhemois, in France.

The first house they saw they approached, and, well nigh dead of hunger and fatigue, they knocked at the door and asked for food and shelter. They obtained both, and much kindness, too, for the master of the house was a Christian, who bade them enter and freely share the hospitality of his humble roof.

“May I inquire,” said their host, “whom I have the happiness of entertaining?”

When Attalus informed him that he was the grandson of the Bishop of Langres, the old man

was delighted, for he had received baptism at the hands of that holy prelate, who had converted him to the Christian faith. The next day, he undertook to conduct Attalus and Leo on their way to the diocese of Langres.

The joy of the venerable bishop, on once more beholding his beloved grandson, was great. Attalus, on the following Sunday, returned public thanks to Almighty God for his deliverance from the heathen Franks; and the Bishop of Langres rewarded Leo for his faithful services with the present of a farm, where he lived happily with his wife and children during the rest of his life.

The death of the Austrasian monarch soon after relieved Auvergne from his heavy yoke; and the lands of Autun were restored to Attalus by his successor, King Clodomir.

ALFRED THE GREAT.



Prince Alfred rewarded by the Queen.



Alfred the Great in the Herdsman's cottage.

ALFRED THE GREAT.

A TALE OF THE ANGLO-SAXONS AND THE DANES.

CHAPTER I.

KING ETHELWULPH AND HIS SONS.—QUEEN JUDITH EXCITES THE YOUNG PRINCES TO A LOVE OF LEARNING.—SUCCESS OF PRINCE ALFRED.—CIVIL WAR.—INCURSIONS OF THE DANES.—DEATH OF THE KING AND CONDUCT OF HIS SON.

ETHELWULPH, the second of our Saxon kings, had four sons, namely, Ethelbald, Ethelbert, Ethelred, and Alfred. The last of these is the prince who afterwards became so famous in history, and acquired the glorious title of Alfred the Great.

Although King Ethelwulph had provided tutors and instructors for his sons, Prince Alfred had attained the age of twelve years before either he or his elder brothers knew how to read or write. The elder princes were indolent, or preferred the pastimes of the chase, and other foolish amusements, to their studies, and refused to learn; their younger brother followed their evil example. The king was of a weak and easy disposition, and did not trouble himself much about anything; but, being foolishly indulgent to his children, he allowed them to do as they pleased, which was very cruel kindness, for the elder princes grew up as ignorant as so many

barbarians. Though they all in turn succeeded to the crown of England, they knew nothing that was proper for monarchs to understand, and they all had very calamitous reigns.

Such is the evil influence of bad example, that Alfred, though he was by nature blessed with the most shining talents, would in all probability have followed in their steps, had not a thirst for knowledge been accidentally awakened in his young mind in the following manner.

His father had married for his second wife, a daughter of Charles the Bald, Emperor of the Franks. This young lady, whose name was Judith, had been carefully educated in all the learning of the south of Europe. She understood several languages, and possessed a taste for poetry, music, and painting, and was a patroness of all who practised these elegant accomplishments.

She was very little older than her husband's children, and must have been surprised and shocked at finding them so ignorant of every thing that young persons of a much humbler rank ought to have known. However, she was very amiable and good-humoured, and had a great desire to win their regard; so instead of finding fault with them, or endeavouring to lower them in their father's esteem by pointing out their deficiencies, as some step-mothers might have done, she laboured to improve and direct their minds to more ennobling things than the rude sports and pastimes in which they had hitherto consumed their precious hours.

As she was so nearly of their own age, she knew it would not be well taken if she began by schooling her husband's sons, or openly abridging their boisterous play. But on rainy days,

when they could not go abroad with their hawks and hounds, and sat yawning and kicking their heels by the hearth, she amused them with heroic songs and romances, as the poetic tales of her native Provençal minstrels were called. These she knew by heart, and would recite to them in their own language; but, in addition to these, she loved to read to them the battle-songs and lofty ballads of their Saxon bards, in the hope of exciting their youthful minds to emulate the fame of their ancestors.

By degrees, the sons of Ethelwulph began to take delight in this new amusement. Without waiting for an invitation they frequently gathered round their royal step-dame, and entreated her to recite some of her wondrous tales or songs, or to read them from her books.

In those days there were no printed books, but history, poetry, philosophy, and devotional works, were all written with a pen, on vellum leaves, in blue, red, and green. Many of these manuscripts, especially such as were designed to be presented to kings, queens, or other great people, were emblazoned with gold and silver, and ornamented with flowers and elegant patterns, traced with great delicacy on the vellum margins of each page. Sometimes they were illuminated, as it was called, with beautiful little pictures of warriors, saints, and angels, in the most lively colours. Such a book as this Queen Judith held in her hand one day, when the four young princes, her step-sons, who were all very fond of their accomplished and amiable step-mother, came to pay their respects to her.

They were immediately attracted by the beautiful exterior of the volume, which was bound in rose-coloured velvet, richly embroidered with

bullion flowers, and studded and clasped with gold, enriched with jewels.

"The outside is indeed pretty," observed the queen; "but that is scarcely worthy of attention in the eyes of any one who is fortunate enough to understand the rare beauty of the interior of this precious volume."

"Show it to us, sweet lady mother. Prithee, let us behold the things whereof thou speakest!" exclaimed the princes, pressing round their royal step-dame.

"Yes," she replied, "you shall look on the rich emblazoned pages of my little book, albeit there can be but small satisfaction, I trow, in doing that to those who understand not the meaning of the fair characters which are so delicately traced. Ye shall behold the illuminated forms of the mighty warriors, fair ladies, and royal chiefs of the olden time, skilfully portrayed in glowing colours therein; but when ye have done this, ye have tasted nothing of the pleasure which those enjoy who are able to penetrate into the hidden beauties of these pages. In sooth, my princely sons, these contain a charm that passeth show—a charm which I would fain impart to the children of my royal husband!"

"To which of us wilt thou give the book, lady mother?" demanded the princes eagerly.

"It is a book in which I take great delight myself," replied she; "for it is full of those beautiful British legends, and tales of the mighty Arthur and the Knights of the Round-table, which ye love to hear me read in the wet, cheerless days, when ye can neither follow your hawking, nor your hunting, your leaping, wrestling, pitching the bar, nor riding at the ring—and when time would hang heavily on your hands,

if ye were left to the resources of your own unoccupied minds for amusement. Yet am I well content to give the book to one of ye, since ye have asked it of me."

"But on which will you bestow it?" cried they, casting eager glances upon the coveted volume.

"I will bestow it," she replied, "upon him who shall first acquire the power of reading it."

"Will you, indeed?" exclaimed young Alfred, with sparkling eyes.

"Yes, upon the faith of a queen, will I," she replied, "but to none other. Books are designed for the learned, and not for the ignorant, by whom they would merely be regarded as toys; and ye are too old, ye sons of Ethelwulph, to require the childish playthings of silly babes."

The three elder princes hung their heads, and retreated from the room, for they were all of an indolent disposition; and though they earnestly desired to possess the book, they could not resolve to take the trouble of learning to read it. Young Alfred, however, modestly approaching his kind step-mother, asked her if she would intrust him with the volume for a little while.

"Yes," she replied, "with pleasure, for I know thou art too careful to injure it, Alfred, and too honourable to wish to obtain possession of it otherwise than by complying with the conditions I have named."

Alfred kissed Queen Judith's hand, and gratefully thanked her for the favourable opinion which she had expressed of his principles. Seeking the friendly aid of a tutor, whose instructions he had heretofore neglected, he soon acquired a knowledge of the alphabet. After this, so great was his application, that in less time than his royal step-mother imagined it would require for

him to gain the common rudiments of reading, he came to her, and with equal grace and spirit read to her the volume, and claimed her promise.

Queen Judith was much surprised at the unexampled progress of the boy. With many praises, she rewarded him with the precious volume, assuring him at the same time, that the learning which she had thus induced him to acquire, was a much more valuable possession.

"Lady, I believe you," replied Alfred; "I have already proved the sweetness of the paths that lead to knowledge, and require no further inducement to tempt me to pursue them."

From that hour, Alfred omitted no opportunity for the improvement of his mind. He could no more be prevailed upon by his brothers or his young companions to waste, in the frivolous amusements in which they delighted, those precious moments of time, of which he had now learned the value.

It was in the acquisition of knowledge alone, that Alfred now took pleasure. He carefully divided his days and great part of his nights into regular portions, each of which was devoted to some particular study. To measure out these peculiar periods of time with exactness, as neither watches nor clocks were to be found in the palace of Ethelwulph, the royal youth had recourse to the following ingenious plan. He procured to be made wax tapers, each of so many inches length as he calculated would burn for one, two, or three hours, just as he required; and to prevent any variation in the time of their burning, from the draughts or currents of air, which, in the ill-built palaces of our Anglo-Saxon monarchs, produced much inconvenience, he invented the horn

lanterns. He thus protected his tapers from wasting and flaring out too soon.

During his father's reign, Alfred acquired a proficiency both in the ancient and modern languages, and a knowledge of history, of many useful arts and sciences, and of the important study of the laws of the wisest nations. So general and extensive, indeed, were his acquirements, and so admirable was the use which he made of them, that he was in due time considered one of the wisest and the greatest, as well as of the best, of men.

Alfred was thus improving, by every means in his power, his naturally fine talents, and growing daily in worth and wisdom. But, in the mean time, his eldest brother, Ethelbald, was wrought upon by evil counsellors to rebel against his mild and too easy father, King Ethelwulph, who had bitter cause to rue the fatal indulgence with which he had treated this son.

To increase the king's troubles, too, his ferocious enemies, the Danes, those heathen barbarians, who had made their first unwelcome visit to England during the reign of his father, King Egbert (somewhere about the year 810), took the opportunity of the civil war between the father and son, to make a formidable descent upon the coast. Growing bolder and bolder, they audaciously sailed up the river Thames, and burnt and pillaged the Tower of London; Canterbury and Rochester having already shared the same fate. Mercia was also invaded, and the whole island would perhaps have fallen under the iron yoke of the foreign spoilers, had not the contending Saxons felt the expediency of smothering their own differences to repel their heathen foes. Even then, it was with difficulty that the Danes could be kept

at bay. Every year brought a fresh swarm of their barbarian hordes to ravage the unfortunate people, who, while they were quarrelling among themselves, had thus allowed foreign invaders to gain a footing among them.

Ethelwulph, worn out with grief and vexation at his domestic broils, and the trouble in which he saw his once flourishing kingdom involved, died in the year 857.

On his death-bed, he forgave his undutiful son, Ethelbald, and appointed him for his successor by his last will. To his second son, Ethelbert, he left the kingdom of Kent and its wide dependencies; and to his two youngest sons, Ethelred and Alfred, he bequeathed all the treasures that were in his coffers. No sooner, however, had Ethelwulph breathed his last, than Ethelbald unjustly appropriated to his own use that which was intended by his weak but amiable father as the portion of Ethelred and Alfred, whom he treated as dependants and servants, rather than as brothers.

Such conduct was not likely to bring a blessing upon his reign. Ethelbald, having given himself up to all sorts of dissipation and pleasure, only survived his poor father, Ethelwulph, two years and a-half; but historians say he died very penitent for his sins.

CHAPTER II.

ETHELBERT BECOMES KING.—BARBAROUS ACTS OF THE DANES.—ALFRED'S CONDUCT TO HIS BROTHER.—KING ETHELRED SUCCEEDS TO THE CROWN.—ALFRED IS MADE COMMANDER OF THE ARMY.—CONTINUED SUCCESS OF THE DANES.—ALFRED SUCCEEDS TO THE THRONE.—DEFEAT OF THE SAXONS AT CHIPPENHAM.—KING ALFRED BECOMES A WANDERER.

KING Ethelwulph had specified in his will, that his sons should successively reign over England; and Ethelbert, his second son, claimed the throne in virtue of this will. His claims were allowed, and he ascended the throne in the year 860, a most calamitous year for England. The Danes, who had been for some time employed in pillaging the fair fields of France—where they burnt Paris, and committed terrible devastations in other towns and cities—now directed their rapacious course once more to the shores of this country. Winchester shared the fate of Paris; and though the men of Berkshire and Hampshire valiantly withstood them, and even gained something like a victory over the invading swarm, it was of little avail. They were so numerous, and so obstinately determined on establishing themselves in England, that they still pressed onward with fire and sword, till they had penetrated as far as the Isle of Thanet, in Kent, where they settled themselves in winter-quarters, and defied the utmost efforts of the Saxons to expel them.

Ethelbert, and the men of Kent, despairing of ridding themselves of these formidable visitors by the force of arms, were so foolish as to offer them a large sum of money to purchase their absence. The treacherous Pagans greedily accepted the

terms of a peace which they never meant to keep. They took the gold, but broke the treaty, and shamelessly ravaged the country, whose inhabitants had weakly confided in their faith.

On the death of Ethelbald, I should tell you, the two young princes had vainly petitioned their second brother, Ethelbert, for the payment of their royal father's legacy. Ethelbert treated their claims with contempt, and took care to keep them at a distance from his court, lest he should be annoyed by their demands.

Ethelred, who was of a fierce, ambitious temper, was much exasperated at his elder brother's conduct, and it was with great reluctance that he submitted to live with the studious Alfred in obscurity, almost in indigence, far remote from the seat of royalty.

Alfred vainly endeavoured to prevail on Ethelred to employ the leisure, of which he was so impatient, in the improvement of his mind, by the acquirement of all sorts of knowledge. But Ethelred had no taste for intellectual pleasures; and he was unreasonable enough to feel angry at seeing Alfred so calmly occupied with his books, apparently in a state of the highest enjoyment, while he himself was ready to die through the tedium of the inactive life he was doomed to lead.

Sometimes, from very pity for the weariness of spirit which tormented Ethelred on the days when he could neither hunt, hawk, nor fish, Alfred would lay aside his translations and his books, and tune his harp to soothe his wayward brother. For Ethelred was passionately fond of music, though he never chose to take the trouble of learning to play on any instrument.

Alfred excelled in music, and was an accomplished minstrel. He could sing the songs of the

days of old, and all the legendary lore of Arthur Pendragon and Sir Lancelot du Lac; and he was skilled in the rare art of composing verses in lofty and inspiring rhymes, to the sound of his own melody, as he swept the chords of the harp. Often while he played, would the restless, discontented Ethelred be charmed into attention, and forgetfulness of all his ill-humour. On his account, therefore, Alfred devoted more of his time to music and poetry than he would otherwise have consumed in those elegant but superficial acquirements. His own inclinations led him to more solid pursuits, but his amiable disposition induced him to sacrifice many of his precious hours to the amusement of his brother.

Ethelred appeared very grateful for these attentions. He professed in return the fondest affection for his youthful brother, assuring him that, if ever he should be called to the throne of England, he would render him immediately that justice which he had been denied by his two eldest brothers, by putting him in possession of his father's royal bequest, with his own share added to it, to compensate for the delay of so many years.

King Ethelbert died in the year 866, after a short but troublous reign. Ethelred, claiming the throne according to the tenor of his royal father's will, was crowned, to the exclusion of Ethelbert's children, who were, in truth, too young to be placed at the head of a nation which was engaged in such direful struggles with the fierce Danes.

As soon as Ethelred's coronation was over, Alfred reminded him of his promise, and requested the payment of his father's legacy.

"Alfred," replied the new sovereign, "I acknowledge the justice of thy claim, and admit that I inconsiderately blamed our two brothers,

Ethelbald and Ethelbert, for not fulfilling the conditions of our royal father's will. I was not, however, aware that, in times like these, a king of England has occasion for more money than his revenue will lawfully furnish; therefore, my loving brother, I must tell thee that thy claim is inconvenient, and to discharge it would be ruinous to me. Thou knowest well that I have succeeded to a barren sceptre, and an empty treasury."

"Far be it from me to act the part of an extortionate creditor, by pressing thee for payment at an inconvenient time, my royal brother," replied Alfred, kindly; "only tell me when thou wilt be likely to make arrangements for the liquidation of the debt which the crown oweth me, and I shall be satisfied to wait thy leisure."

"Then, to be plain with thee, Alfred, I fear thou must wait till my death," replied the king, "when, according to the tenor of our royal father's will, thou wilt receive, not only all the crown oweth thee, but the crown itself."

"Nay, marry, Ethelred," said Alfred, "but this is a strange way of settling the question. Thou art to the full as likely as myself to be the survivor. I am, however, altogether destitute of the means of supporting the royal rank of an Atheling, and must be fain to return to that obscurity of which thou wert so impatient during the reigns of our elder brethren."

"Say not so, my sweet brother," replied Ethelred; "thou shalt have the supreme command of all my armies, and shalt be next unto me in authority throughout my realm. Only forgive me this debt, and serve me as faithfully as thou didst during the years of adversity, when we abode together in the same lowly shieling, and had but

one fireside, and one purse between us, and thy love was my only solace."

The eyes of Alfred filled with tears at these remembrances. He generously cancelled the debt, and from that hour applied all the energies of his mighty mind to assist Ethelred, both in the government of his kingdom, and in his struggle with his Danish foes.

These barbarous invaders had obtained powerful reinforcements from the mother country, whence these northern swarms continued to pour into England. They brought with them their celebrated raven banner, which had been woven and worked, they pretended, in one morning, by the three daughters of their celebrated king, Regner Ladbok. This standard, which was always borne before the Danish host, they either superstitiously believed, or cunningly pretended, was endued with magical powers. The raven, the bird of Odin, whose form was depicted on its ample folds, prophesied, as they said, the success of every battle in which they engaged, if it stood erect, as in the act of soaring; but if it drooped its head, and hung its wings, then a defeat was supposed to be at hand. No doubt there was much artful trickery used by the persons who surrounded this ominous standard, for the deception of both friends and foes.

So bravely did Ethelred fight, so nobly was he seconded by his illustrious brother, Alfred, that the Danes must have been wholly expelled, notwithstanding their numbers and their ferocious courage, if the Northumbrians and Mercians had cordially united themselves with the patriotic men of Wessex, in repelling the common foe. Unfortunately, however, England was still divided into several petty states, or kingdoms, which

were ruled by their own kings, under the supreme sway of one sovereign. This chief was called the Bretwalda, or "Wielder of the Britons;" and to him they all paid homage, and pledged assistance in times of distress, and, when required, to repel all foreign invaders.

But, instead of so doing, the Northumbrians were quarrelling among themselves, and it was not until they were attacked by the fierce Pagans, that they suspended their internal warfare to march against them. Their resolution, however, was taken too late. The Danes gained a great victory, slew the two rival kings, Osbert and Ella, who had been contending for the kingdom, and Northumbria was subjected to the iron sway of the strangers.

Mercia next felt the scourge. The barbarian Danes entered that territory, and took the town of Nottingham. The Mercians humbly solicited Ethelred's assistance, who, with Alfred, promptly marched to give battle to the common foe, and they defeated him in several bloody conflicts, but were too weak to recover Nottingham, which was henceforth added to the strong chain of Danish burghs, as they were called, and which then comprised Derby, Leicester, Lincoln, Stamford, York and Chester.

The royal brothers found it impossible to dislodge the foe from these important positions, yet they gained repeated victories over them. At a place called, from that circumstance, *Thri-kingham*, three of the Danish kings were slain, and buried on the field of battle. Five others, who came fresh from the Danish coasts, with innumerable followers, supplied their place, and attacked the kingdom of East Anglia, where they barbarously slew King Edmund, the young and heroic

sovereign of that division of England which comprised the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk.

At length the insatiate Pagans attacked the kingdom of Wessex itself, which was stoutly defended by the royal brothers, Ethelred and Alfred. A bloody battle was fought at Ashdown, or Aston, where the Danish king, Braeseg, together with the terrible chiefs, Sidrac, Osbern, Frena, and Harold, were slain by their victorious arms. But the triumph was dearly bought by the English, for Ethelred was mortally wounded, and the victory was of no permanent advantage to the impoverished and exhausted Saxons, who had so manfully supported their sovereign in resisting the fatal progress of the Danes.

Nothing could exceed the misery of his people at the period when our glorious Alfred succeeded to the throne of England. A less resolved and less energetic character would have relinquished the struggle in despair, and compromised the honour of his country by consenting to become the vassal of a Danish sovereign; but Alfred possessed a mind not to be conquered by the unfavourable aspect of his fortunes. He considered himself to have been especially appointed by the decrees of his heavenly Father, for the guidance and deliverance of his native land: and he determined to fulfil the duties of the lofty station to which he had been called, by studying the best interests of his people, and, if required, by sacrificing himself in their service.

During the first year of his reign, he commanded in person, and placed himself in the post of danger, in nine pitched battles that were fought with the Danes. In some of these contests his military talents and intrepid courage obtained a glorious, but useless victory; for in every in-

stance the Danes were tenfold in numbers, and too often did their brutal force overpower the gallant, but scanty band of heroes, whom the Saxon monarch arrayed against them.

The Danes never gave quarter, unless to such prisoners as could bribe their avarice to spare them with the promise of a large ransom. They showed pity neither to aged men, helpless women, nor tender infants. They burned villages, and pulled down churches; and, in short, wherever they obtained the mastery, they committed the most frightful ravages.

More than once did Alfred endeavour, for the sake of his bleeding country, to negotiate a peace with these barbarians. In each instance, though they had sworn by oaths, which they pretended to hold sacred, to preserve the conditions of the truce into which they had entered, they violated their faith, and recommenced their depredations on the unguarded Saxons.

At length the spirit of the people of the land was broken. They were wearied of wars of which there appeared no end. At length the Danes surprised the line of defence at Chippenham, in Wiltshire, and defeated the Saxons with great slaughter, pouring through the western counties like a resistless torrent; and carrying fire and sword into the homesteads of all who opposed them; upon which the people submitted to their iron yoke, and all, except Alfred, their king, confessed themselves to be conquered. He alone, with a handful of his heroic followers, made neither submission nor terms of pacification with the barbarous heathens; he secretly took his way on foot to the wild solitudes of Somersetshire, where for a time he wandered up and down, seeking some place of refuge and concealment from

the foes who were fiercely thirsting for his blood.

His followers were at length reduced to six ; a number too few for defence, and too many for security. Alfred, therefore, judged it most prudent for them all to separate, and to go forth in different directions, in the hope that they might once more kindle the expiring flame of freedom among the subjugated Saxons.

Oscar, Ealdorman of Devonshire, and his younger son, Odulph, expressed the most reluctance to quit their fugitive monarch in his sore distress. They were the last who tarried with him ; and when all the rest had departed, they followed him weeping, because he had commanded them to leave him. When they came to the river Thone, Alfred turned about, and said, in the words of St. Paul, "Wherefore do ye go about to weep, and break my heart?" "We weep, royal Alfred," said they, "because thou hast forbidden us to share thine adverse fortunes ; as if we were like the swarm of summer-flies, who follow only while the sun shineth !"

"My valiant Ealdorman, and you, my faithful Odulph, listen to me," said the king. "My sun is not set, albeit it hath pleased the King of kings, for the present, to permit it to be overcast with the dark clouds of adversity, doubtless for some wise purpose. I trust that, if it be for the good of my people, it may yet shine forth in glory, and perchance the brighter for this eclipse ; but we must not hope for this unless we ourselves take diligent means to effect this happy change, and that cannot be done by my friends sitting down to lament and condole with me in my reverse. No, it is not by sympathy, but by active exertions, that ye shall best serve me ; therefore, I pray ye, leave me to mine own care, and return to your

own country and to your own people, that ye may keep me in their remembrance. When the iron yoke of Guthrum the Dane galleth the men of Mercia most deeply, then rise up, and cry aloud in the ears of the people, 'Alfred the king yet liveth;—he only bideth his time to come to your deliverance;—but how should he fight without soldiers?' ”

“Thou shalt be obeyed, my royal lord,” said Ealdorman, bowing himself, and pressing the hand of his sovereign to his lips. “I will return to Mercia, and do as thou hast said; but let my son, Odulph, tarry with thee, if it be only in the capacity of a servant.”

“I am well content to be mine own serving-man, yea, and to seek a service for myself, till the present troublous times be overpast,” replied the king; “and if Odulph desire to serve me, it shall be by bringing me good tidings from thee and others of my faithful friends, who employ themselves for the deliverance of my people from the yoke of the Pagan Dane.”

Alfred embraced the noble Ealdorman and his brave son, and bade them farewell. For a moment after their departure, he stood sad and silent, feeling that he must now seek his fortune among strangers; but he commended himself to the care and direction of God, who, he doubted not, would shape his unknown paths aright, and he then proceeded on his doubtful way.

CHAPTER III.

ALFRED, IN DISTRESS, MEETS WITH A NEATHERD.—ACCOMPANIES HIM HOME.—IS REPELLED AND ABUSED BY SWITHA, THE NEATHERD'S WIFE.—SLEEPS IN THE CALVES'-STALL.—PERFORMS SERVICES OF DRUDGERY.—MAKES HIMSELF KNOWN TO THE NEATHERD.—SUFFERS THE CAKES TO BURN.—ARRIVAL OF THE EARL OF DEVON'S SON.

IT was the very depth of winter, when King Alfred, without a creature to guide him, got bewildered in the desolate marshes. He had concluded that he should have to pass the night in this doleful place. He paused and looked around him, and observed cattle feeding in a distant pasture. These he knew, of course, must have an owner; so he made his way through quags, and over ditches and miry pools, to the spot where they were, and fortunately arrived at the very moment when the old neatherd, who had charge of them, was preparing to lead them home, to house them for the night.

"Save you, good father," said Alfred; "may a Saxon stranger, whom the Danish robbers have rendered homeless and destitute, share a lodging with thy master's cattle for the night?"

"Wilt thou swear unto me that thou art not thyself a Dane in disguise, devising how thou mayest rob the ceorl, my master, of his beasts?" said the old man.

"Thinkest thou the oaths of the false Pagans, who have twice forsworn themselves to Alfred the King, are in any way to be regarded?" said the royal Saxon, with a smile. "If so, thou hast a better opinion of the race than I have. But I

pledge thee my word, that I am a true Saxon, a Christian man, and no Dane."

"Well, then, thou shalt be welcome to share my weanling calf's crib to-night," said the neatherd; "but belike thou art in need of a supper, as well as a bed."

"To say truth, father," replied the king, "I have not broken my fast this day, nor drunk, except from these marshy streams; therefore I should be right thankful for a morsel of food, even if it were of the coarsest rye-bread."

"Rye-bread, forsooth!" cried the neatherd; "thou art talking of dainties, I trow! thou wilt get nothing better than flat oaten cakes here."

"I have always had a particular desire to taste an oaten cake," observed the king.

"Follow me, then," said the neatherd, "and thou shalt have thy desire."

He then, following the cattle, to whom the path was familiar, led Alfred through a tangled track, which was concealed from general observation by weeds and brambles, to the little Isle of Athelney, then called Athelingey, situated in a wild unfrequented spot, surrounded by marshes and moors, at the conflux of the rivers Thone and Parret. In a lonely nook of this dreary place, stood the neatherd's lowly cot, or shieling, adjoining to the neat-house where the ceorl and his master's cattle were sheltered of a night, and in rainy and snowy weather.

A bright fire was burning on the hearth, when the cold and weary monarch followed his humble subject into the shieling, where Switha, the industrious but vixenish spouse of the neatherd, was broiling fish over the embers.

"Switha," said Cudred, for that was the neatherd's name "I have brought thee home a

guest, who will be glad to partake of our supper."

"A guest, forsooth!" cried Switha, casting a very disdainful glance upon the disguised monarch, whose garments were of the homeliest fashion, and much the worse for his wanderings in the miry marshes of the Thone and Parret, and woefully rent by the brambles through which he had recently scrambled. "Dost thou think, thou born-fool!" continued she, turning to her husband, "that I have naught better to do than to broil fish and bake cakes for all the vagabonds that roam the land?"

"Patience, good Switha," replied Cudred; "I have not asked so heavy a task of thee; having brought thee no vagabond, but a civil West-Saxon, whom it will be charity to feed and shelter for the night."

"I am not addicted to charity, Cudred," said the housewife, sullenly.

"So it appears, my mistress," said the king, hitching the three-legged stool which Cudred had given him into a comfortable corner of the hearth; "but," continued he, "thou shouldst rather confess the sinful churlishness of thy temper with shame and sorrow, than mention it as a boast."

"Out of my house, then, saucy fellow, and sup the black ooze of the Parret for thy repast!" exclaimed the angry virago.

"My good woman," replied the king, "thou hast surely paid little heed to the words of the blessed Apostle, who, when he exhorteth his Christian converts to the practice of every kind of holiness, persuades them also to the duty of hospitality, in these words, 'Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.'"

"Thou lookest like a guest of that fashion, dost thou not, thou sorry fellow?" cried Switha, holding a lighted pinebranch, and contemptuously surveying the king from head to foot.

"Nay, fie upon thee, woman," cried the neatherd, angrily: "by that ligh I can discern that our guest hath not been accustomed to beg an alms of the like of thee, and wherefore shouldst thou be so hard of heart as to embitter, by thy rude taunts, the bread which his necessity compels him to receive at thy hands?"

"I have heard that charity begins at home, and I am sure we are poor enough," growled Switha.

"We are not poor enough to lack the food that we are required to bestow on a famishing fellow-creature," returned Cudred. So saying, he laid hands on the largest oaten cake that was baking on the hearth, which, together with the finest and best broiled fish, he placed on a trencher and presented to Alfred; and without paying the slightest regard to Switha's angry remonstrances, opened a skin of cider that hung in a corner of the room, and filled him a wooden cup of the refreshing beverage.

Alfred, after devoutly returning thanks to God for this comfortable supply, ate his supper with an appetite so keen that Switha said "she thought he must be a wolf in disguise."

The king replied to this ill-mannered taunt with a good-humoured smile, and a pleasant joke. Then, after returning his grateful thanks for his entertainment, went to bed very contentedly in the crib with Tibby the weanling calf, having first assisted the good man Cudred to strew the floor with clean rushes.

Switha was very angry to see Alfred make his appearance again in the morning, just in time to partake of the breakfast of milk-pottage which she had prepared for her husband and herself. She protested he should not have a spoonful; but Cudred, in whose eyes the disguised monarch had found favour, took a third earthen bowl from the shelf, and suddenly possessing himself of the pipkin in which the porridge was boiling over the fire, divided it into three equal shares, and gave his guest one.

Nothing but the fear of breaking the pipkin prevented Switha from flinging it at her husband's head, in return for this act of benevolence; but she positively refused to touch a drop of the porridge which Cudred had poured into her bowl. "Nay then, mistress," said her husband, "rather than the good porridge should be wasted, I will divide it between this hungry stranger and myself;" with these words, he poured it into Alfred's porringer and his own.

Alfred courteously offered the porridge to Switha, assuring her "that he had not tasted it, and would not on any account be the cause of spoiling her breakfast."

Even the churlish disposition of Switha was moved by this amiable conduct on the part of the despised stranger, whose manners, she perceived, were very superior to his humble array; so she tossed him an oaten cake in return for his civility, and set to work to make a fresh mess of porridge for herself.

When they had eaten their early meal, Cudred drew Alfred on one side, and addressed him in these words: "Thy breeding agreeth not with thy present fortunes; tell me truly, art thou not some mighty Thane or Ealdorman in disguise?"

Then Alfred replied—

“I am neither Thane nor Ealdorman—but Alfred, thy king. I know by the token of thy generous hospitality to me when thou didst believe me nothing better than a houseless beggar, that thou art a good man; therefore do I confide to thee a secret which puts my life in thy hands, in the full assurance that thou wilt not betray me to those who have set a price upon my head.”

“Not all the gold of Denmark should tempt me to commit so base a crime,” exclaimed the neatherd; “but see, my royal lord, that thou do not let our mistress Switha into the secret, for woman-folks have long tongues.”

The king promised prudence, and asked permission to remain the neatherd’s guest. To this Cudred respectfully assented; but to prevent all suspicion, it was agreed that Alfred should sometimes employ himself in the farm and in the cottage, in various servile offices. So obligingly did he conduct himself in these matters, that even the shrewish Switha did not offer any violent opposition to his remaining with them during the winter season, though she treated him with occasional revilings for his laziness, and upbraidings on the score of the keenness of his appetite, which she always assured him resembled that of a wolf.

To escape from the angry clamour of this virago’s tongue, Alfred passed whole days in fishing, or shooting the hares, rabbits, wild-fowl, and pigeons, in which the adjacent moors and marshes abounded. One rainy day it happened that he could not pursue these sylvan sports, and thinking it would be a good opportunity for repairing his bow, and making himself a fresh stock of arrows, he set himself to work at this new employment in the chimney-corner, while Switha was

engaged in kneading the oaten cakes for family consumption. When the busy housewife had prepared a goodly batch of these, she placed them on the hearth to bake, and charged Alfred to turn them whenever they required, and to have a care they did not burn.

Alfred, whose mind was occupied with sorrowful reflections on the miserable condition of his beloved country, continued to employ his hands in feathering his arrows from the wing of a wild-goose, without raising his eyes, or bestowing a single thought on the bread that had been so earnestly commended to his care till the precious cakes caught fire, and the indignant Switha was attracted by the smell of their burning.

"Out upon thee," she screamed, "for a lazy, useless fellow! Thou art ready enough, I trow, to devour the cakes when baked, and yet thinkest it too much trouble to keep them from burning! No wonder thou art a poor houseless vagrant, with such idleness and neglect of business! How thinkest thou ever to come to any good in the world, be ye who ye may?" Instead of replying to these rude and cutting taunts with angry words, the royal fugitive meekly acknowledged that he had been much to blame in not attending to the baking, and promised to be more careful for the time to come.

"Ay, ay," cried Switha, "that is always the way with thee. That smooth tongue of thine is better to thee than silver or gold; for it obtains for thee food, lodging, and friends, and softens all the wrath which thy faults provoke. However, I shall set by all the burnt cakes for thy portion of the week's bread, I promise thee; and thou shalt have no other till they are all eaten."

"My good mistress," said Alfred, "here com-

eth a pilgrim-boy to ask thy charity. May I bestow one of these cakes on him?"

"Thou mayest do what thou wilt with thine own, man!" she replied; "but do not presume to give away my property to idle vagrants like thyself."

"But, mistress," rejoined Alfred, "may I not give him that which was to have been my portion for dinner?"

"No, indeed," replied Switha, whisking away the cakes in a great hurry; "I have enough to do with feeding one vagrant, without being saddled with his charitable doings to others."

Then Alfred took a gold enamelled amulet from his bosom, and said,—

"I will give thee this jewel, Switha, if thou wilt permit me to feed this poor pilgrim."

Switha's eyes brightened at the sight of the glittering prize, and she immediately tossed one of the best baked cakes to Alfred. This he kindly divided with the pilgrim-boy, while Switha ran to secure the jewel in a place of safety, leaving Alfred alone with the pilgrim, in whom he had recognised the Ealdorman of Devon's son.

This curious gold amulet is still to be seen; it was dug up, not many years since, among the marshes of Athelingey.

CHAPTER IV.

NEWS FROM THE SAXONS.—THE DANISH BANNER CAPTURED.—ALFRED REJOINS THE EARL OF DEVON.—VISITS THE DANISH CAMP AS A MINSTREL.—HIS SUCCESS THERE.—RETURNS FROM THE CAMP.—GREAT BATTLE WITH THE DANES.—THEIR FINAL OVERTHROW.—THE DANES BECOME CHRISTIANS.—THE FAME OF ALFRED.—HIS DEATH.

AS soon as Switha had quitted the apartment, "Now," said Alfred, "declare thy tidings, young Odulph; for long and wearily have I watched for thy coming, while I have been pent up in this marshy nook of the Parret and the Thone."

"My tidings, royal Alfred," replied the youth, "may be comprised in these words: Hubba, the Dane, the terror of England, is slain, and the magical banner of the Raven waves in the halls of my father."

"How!" cried Alfred, "is Kinwith Castle in possession of the Danes?"

"Not so, my royal master," said the youth; "but the banner of the Danes, which was taken by my victorious father's hand, waves there triumphantly. We were pent up by Hubba and Biorn Ironside, within the walls of Kinwith Castle, and strait and sore was the siege, till our provisions failed. When the last loaf was eaten, and our archers had launched their last arrows from the loop-holes, at the foe, my valiant father prevailed upon the garrison to make one bold sally upon the besiegers, and either to cut our way through them, or to sell our lives dearly by fighting to the last.

"The Danes, who dreamed not what hearts were hidden within the tottering walls of Kinwith, were feasting and casting lots for the spoil, which they already fancied was in their rapacious grasp, when, sword in hand, we silently crept forth from our fortress. Our noiseless march was unheard amidst their shouts of drunken revelry. We fell upon them, and, few as we were, routed the multitude, and slew their Pagan chiefs. They were fifty to one, yet the victory was ours. We raised the cry of 'Alfred the King;' and lo! all Wessex is in arms; and the men of Mercia demand the presence of their royal lord."

Alfred, on hearing these joyful tidings, bade a hasty farewell to the good neatherd and Switha. He hastened to the Earl of Devon's camp, with whom he concerted his skilful plan for the deliverance of his people from the Danish yoke. He then sent messengers to all his faithful adherents, desiring them to draw together small bodies of armed men from all parts of the kingdom, to the general rallying-place of Selwood Forest, the great wood of Somersetshire.

This was in the year 878, soon after the Easter festival had been kept. The Danes were then encamped at Ethandune, now called Eddington, at no great distance from the spot.

But before active measures could be taken to dislodge or attack them, it was necessary to obtain correct information as to their numbers, the strength of their position, and all other particulars.

"We must employ some one on whose judgment and veracity we can confidently rely, to procure this information," said the Earl of Devon; "but it will be a difficult matter to find a proper person to undertake so perilous an office."

"By no means," replied Alfred; "I know a person who will adventure it."

"Indeed!" said the Ealdorman; "where is such a one to be found?"

"Here!" replied the king.

The Ealdorman looked with surprise, for there was no one present but the king and himself.

"Orcar," said Alfred, "this office is of too great importance to be undertaken by any one but myself."

"Oh, my royal lord, for the sake of your country, imperil not your precious person, by undertaking so dangerous an adventure," exclaimed the Ealdorman.

"Fear nothing," rejoined the king; "I shall bring you back a good account of myself, and of my commission, by the morning, I make no doubt. This night the Danes will be keeping one of their heathen festivals, and I shall furnish them with music for the occasion."

"The king then disguised himself as a minstrel or glee-man, and taking his harp in his hand—which was a much smaller and simpler instrument than our tall modern harps—he proceeded to the Danish camp.

Alfred had some miles to walk, and the stars were already gemming the deep blue vault of heaven, when he perceived the lights of the Danish encampment gleaming before him.

The first observation which occurred to him was, that, contrary to their usual practice of encamping on a high hill, the Danes were posted in a valley, and that their tents were carelessly pitched, according to the convenience or caprice of the chiefs, instead of being arranged in a compact form, and their approaches properly guarded by vigilant sentinels. As he advanced, his ears

were saluted with shouts of revelry, and he had very little trouble in making his way within their entrenchments. Being there questioned by a stern-looking Holda, or chief, he replied in the Danish tongue, which he spoke with great fluency, "that he had come thither as a glee-man to amuse the Danish camp with his minstrelsy."

"A minstrel, a minstrel!" cried a gaily-decorated youth, pressing forward; "my uncle Guthrum, our leader, is sick and out of spirit, for grief of the loss of our raven banner. He cannot attend the festival of Friga to-night, and will be glad to hear music in his own pavilion."

"Stand back, Prince Eric," said the Holda Turketil, angrily; "how know you that this fellow is a minstrel?"

"Nay, that point is easily decided," said Eric; "let him give us a proof of his skill."

On hearing this, Alfred immediately tuned his harp, and, in a voice of powerful sweetness, sang the following verses to a popular Danish measure:—

Sons of Lochlin, fierce and strong,
Listen to the minstrel's song;
I can sing, in lofty rhyme,
Legends of the olden time.
How the sea-kings in their pride,
Crossed the ocean's foaming tide;
And the raven waved its wings
O'er the fall of Saxon kings.
Linked with Odin's mighty name,
Tales of wonder, love, and fame,
I can sing; and I can say,—
Northmen, list the minstrel's lay.

"Excellent," cried Eric, "those are the themes to win gold in a Danish camp. Thou shalt go with me to the pavilion of the mighty Guthrum, and sing him into a good humour, if it be possible."

Turketil was about to offer some objection, but Eric took Alfred by the arm, and boldly introduced him into the pavilion of the melancholy leader of the Danish army, with these words—"Uncle, I have brought a sweet-voiced bard, to charm away thy sorrow. Hath he thy permission to tune his harp?"

Guthrum signified his assent. Alfred, who was not permitted to sit in the presence of the Danish leader and prince, for Eric was the son of the king of Denmark's sister, then placed one foot upon a stool, and supporting his harp on his knee, sang the wondrous legend of Regner Ladbrok's contest with the dragon; a sort of Danish version of the English tale of St. George and the Dragon.

So sweet was the voice, so skilful the touch of the royal minstrel, and so noble was the song which he had composed for the occasion, that the melancholy Guthrum's attention was captivated, and he listened with admiration and delight. Prince Eric, who, on account of his elevated rank, was seated on an embroidered tabouret, or stool, a little in advance of his uncle, loudly applauded the performance; and even the surly old Holda, who had suspiciously watched the bearing of the royal minstrel, was so charmed with the national tale he had chosen for the subject of his song, that he actually thrust his hand into a pouch that was suspended from his girdle, and rewarded him with a silver coin, exclaiming, "No one but a Danish scald (or bard) could have sung that song."

In after-days, Alfred was wont to show the coin, and say that it was the most gratifying tribute to his vocal and poetical powers he had ever received, for he could not doubt the surly Turketil's sincerity.

When Alfred had sung the deeds of Regner Ladbok, he made a profound obeisance to Guthrum and to Eric, and offered to retire. But his task was not yet over, for all the fierce Danish chiefs, who had been attracted round their leader's tent by the sound of his melody, gathered about him, and demanded of him songs of Odin, of Siguurd, and of a dozen other Pagan chiefs, whom they blindly worshipped as demi-gods.

It was well for the royal Saxon that he was acquainted with all the Northmen's traditions, and also that he possessed the faculty of composing lyrical verses on any subject; for he was detained in the Danish camp three days and nights, by the chiefs and princes, who were so much delighted with his minstrelsy that after singing himself hoarse, Alfred was compelled to depart privily, without the ceremony of leave-taking. This he did, in order to escape the honour of being appointed the Danish leader's chief bard, having previously rejected very liberal offers from old Turketil, who was ambitious of taking him into his own service.

When, at length, Alfred escaped from the Danish camp, and rejoined his gallant Saxons in Selwood Forest, he found them in great consternation on account of his protracted absence, and ready to march forward in search of him. Alfred was now master of all the secrets of the enemy's camp; his plans were formed with skill and celerity; and he was acquainted with the strength and weakness of the foes with whom he had shortly to contend.

His royal standard was unfurled at a place called Edgar's stone, on the verge of the forest; and the men of Hampshire, Somerset, and Dorset, flocked around it, shouting, "Alfred our king liveth!"

All things being prepared for the battle that was to decide the fate of England, Alfred encamped his army on a commanding height, at sunset. On the following morning he advanced to Ethandune, and there attacked the foe, having previously exhorted his brave followers to win the freedom of their country, or to die bravely, with their weapons in their hands. The speech of their patriot king was received with shouts of applause; and the battle commenced with a discharge of arrows. Then lances were hurled at the fierce Northmen; and when all their missiles were exhausted, the Saxons and the Danes engaged hand to hand. After a deadly conflict, in which Alfred performed prodigies of valour, he, with his gallant Saxons, remained master of the field; and, Guthrum and his Danes were compelled to flee to their entrenchments. After a siege of fourteen days, they all agreed to submit to Alfred's terms, who generously offered them the choice of either quitting England, or remaining in peaceable possession of East-Anglia and a part of Mercia, as his vassals, and becoming Christians. The Danish leader wisely accepted the latter alternative, and, renouncing the errors of Pagan idolatry, became a Christian convert.

Alfred was his god-father, having previously taken great pains in instructing his former enemies in the divine truths of that holy faith whereby alone salvation may be obtained by sinful men. The Danes followed the example of their leader, and hundreds of them received baptism on the same day.

After this crowning glory had been added to the laurels of his decisive victory, Alfred turned his attention to promoting the happiness of his people, by the establishment of the wisest laws

that ever had been devised, and the encouragement of learning, and of arts and sciences. He was called the shepherd of his people, the darling of the English, and the delight of Christendom.

He wrote many books, both in prose and poetry, and commenced a translation of the Scriptures into the Saxon tongue, for the use of such of his subjects as did not understand Latin; but his death in the year 901, in the thirtieth year of his reign, prevented the completion of this important undertaking. Of all the ancient British kings, he was the wisest and the best, and his name will ever be dear to the lovers of true greatness and unsullied virtue.

BELA THE BLIND.



Alme imploring the clemency of his Brother.



Julian conducting Bela from the city.

BELA THE BLIND.

A TALE OF HUNGARY.

CHAPTER I.

DEATH OF THE KING OF HUNGARY.—HIS SONS BEING INFANTS, HE IS SUCCEDED BY HIS BROTHER.—VIRTUOUS REIGN OF KING ULADISLAUS.—BAD DISPOSITIONS OF THE TWO YOUNG PRINCES.—THE SUCCESSION OF COLOMON SET ASIDE.—BIRTH OF PRINCE BELA.

THERE was once a king of Hungary, named Grisa, who died in the year 1077, leaving two sons, the eldest of whom was named Colomon, and the younger Alme.

These princes were very young at the time of their father's death—too young, as the nobles of Hungary considered, to govern a kingdom which, on account of its being situated in the midst of several barbarian states, was constantly exposed to the attacks of the fierce wandering hordes of Tartars and Turcoman robbers, who were always seeking to extend their conquests.

Hungary was also engaged at this time in a war with the Poles and the Russians. The nobles, therefore, rightly considering that they had need of a mighty warrior, instead of a feeble boy, to reign over them, and to defend their country from her formidable enemies, placed Uladislaus, the brother of their late king, Grisa, on the throne.

They, however, stipulated that he should educate his two nephews, so as to render one or other of them worthy to become his successor.

Uladislaus was a great sovereign and a good man. He added Bulgaria and Russia to his dominions, defeated both the Tartars and the Poles, and conquered Cracow, the capital of Poland. His sister, who had married the Prince of Dalmatia and Croatia, gave him those principalities after her husband's death; so that King Uladislaus added greatly, during his reign, to the extent of his dominions. He did more than that, for he laboured to promote the happiness of his people at home, by the encouragement of piety, virtue, and industry, and was one of the best kings that ever reigned over Hungary.

He was very desirous of rendering one or other of the royal youths, his nephews, worthy of one day succeeding to the throne of their father, Grisa; and he performed the part of a good uncle, in carefully directing their studies, and endeavouring to imbue their tender minds with such sentiments as would fit them for the elevated station to which they would be called on his death.

Colomon, the eldest of these princes, was possessed of considerable talents; but his person was diminutive and deformed, and he was remarkably ugly. His temper was so bad, and his manners so ungracious and offensive, that it became a sort of proverb in the palace, that Prince Colomon was as crooked in disposition as in form.

Some persons to whom it has pleased their all-wise Creator to award the trying dispensation of bodily defects, instead of murmuring against his good pleasure, with whom his creatures are but as clay in the hands of the potter, who giveth to

one vessel a comely form, and fashioneth another after a less honourable mould, have laboured to adorn their minds with such rare accomplishments as have more than compensated for the homeliness of their exterior.

It was not so with Prince Colomon; for the malignity of his disposition increased his ugliness and deformity, by distorting the lines of his face so as to render him an object of terror and aversion to all around him. The king, his uncle, vainly endeavoured to correct his faults, by the influence both of reason and religion; pointing out to him the folly, as well as the wickedness, of incurring the hatred of those whose affection it was his interest to secure; but Colomon would not listen to any counsel which bore the language of reproof. As he advanced towards manhood, he daily gave such proofs of cruelty, arrogance, and injustice, that the magnates of Hungary agreed that it would be very improper to place a prince of his temper on the throne—"For," said they, "those who cannot command their own evil passions, are never fit to have the lives and happiness of others at their disposal."

So they requested the king to place Prince Colomon in a monastery, and to name his younger brother, Prince Alme, for his successor.

The king reluctantly complied with the wishes of his people, because he was aware that when the claims of an elder brother are set aside in a reigning family, it is generally the cause of a civil war, in which there are always bloodshed and violence. On such occasions, some parties espouse the cause of one prince, and some that of the other, and then the whole country is thrown into a state of confusion, and sometimes the dispute is carried on for many years.

It was to prevent these evils that hereditary monarchies were first established. In the infancy of every state, kings have been elected, or chosen, from the great body of the people; but, as the progress of civilization has advanced, this custom had necessarily been laid aside, because the people have found it very difficult to agree in their choice of a king. So many ambitious persons, at various times, and in different countries, aspired to that dignity, that crimes and murders multiplied without end; and the strongest, not the best, was frequently chosen to fill the throne. In unenlightened times and countries, it was a common case for such persons to destroy all those who had opposed their election. In modern times, by keeping the line of succession unbroken, contests of this sort, and the crimes produced by them, have been almost wholly avoided.

King Uladislaus represented these things to his nobles; but they replied, "That Prince Colomon was of so bad a disposition, that if he came to the throne, he would abuse his power, and compel them to dethrone him, which could not be done without bloodshed. Therefore, it would be the wisest thing to prevent the evil, by doing as they proposed."

Prince Alme, the younger son of the late king, was beautiful in his person, and of graceful manners, which rendered him, at first, very popular with those who only judge from external appearances. It was soon discovered, however, that, in point of moral worth, he was not much better than Prince Colomon, though somewhat more agreeable in his conduct.

Colomon was envious, arrogant, and cruel; Alme, weak, vain, and frivolous, taking great pride in his personal advantages. Having had

foolish flatterers about him, who were accustomed to draw invidious comparisons between his beauty and the deformity of his elder brother, he had frequently made use of insulting and boastful expressions on that subject, in Colomon's hearing, who was painfully conscious of his own defects, and keenly resented any allusions to his deformity.

The calamities which befall people in maturer years, often spring from seeds which they have themselves incautiously sown in early youth, perhaps in childhood,—and forgotten, till the consequences of their folly and wickedness burst upon them. This was the case with Prince Alme of Hungary; the natural affection with which, notwithstanding the moroseness of his temper, his elder brother might have regarded him, was changed into deadly hatred, in consequence of a few silly expressions, arising from youthful vanity.

Young people ought to be very cautious on such points. Personal observations should always be avoided; for if favourable, they may bear the construction of flattery, and if the contrary, they are both indelicate and unkind. No person of benevolence would wish to give pain to another, and few things are so offensive as remarks or taunts on bodily defects. It is both inhuman and foolish to make such remarks. They cannot but be displeasing to our Creator, whose work is thus despised; they make a very disadvantageous impression on every person of good feeling who may happen to hear them; and they are often bitterly revenged by those at whose expense they are made; and, even if forgiven, they are not easily forgotten.

Prince Alme was rash and inconsiderate in

everything From the hour when he was declared his uncle's successor to the exclusion of his elder brother, he pursued a headlong course of folly and extravagance, which shocked and offended his best friends, and alarmed the king; who began to entertain fears that, of the two brothers, the magnates of Hungary had settled the succession on the worst qualified of the two for the royal office.

In the hope of reclaiming Prince Alme from the fatal line of conduct upon which he had entered, the king promoted a marriage between him and a beautiful young lady of the court. By this marriage he became, in due time, the father of a lovely boy, who was named Beia, afterwards called, with reference to his sufferings, "Bela the Blind," and whose history forms the subject of the present tale.

There were great rejoicings on account of the birth of this prince, in whom the nobles and people of Hungary hoped to see a revival of the ancient glory of their royal line, which appeared to have sadly degenerated in the two sons of Grisa.

CHAPTER II.

COLOMON TAKES THE MONASTIC VOWS.—HIS HYPOCRISY, AND ITS SUCCESS.—THE KING DIES.—COLOMON EXPELS HIS BROTHER, AND MAKES HIMSELF KING.—ALME AND HIS INFANT SON, BELA, MADE PRISONERS.—COLOMON ORDERS THEIR EYES TO BE PUT OUT.—ALME DIES.—JULIAN, THE GREEK SLAVE.—HIS KINDNESS TO THE LITTLE BLIND BELA.

THE infant Bela soon became a child of the fairest promise, under the guidance of his royal uncle, Uladislaus, who regarded him as

the only hope of Hungary. His thoughtless father, Prince Alme, continued obstinate and incurable in his folly, and gave daily cause of uneasiness to the king, and of displeasure to the magnates of Hungary.

Meantime, his elder brother, the excluded Prince Colomon, was confined as a sort of state-prisoner within the narrow walls of a monastery, where he had, by the policy of the king and the council of Hungary, been compelled to pronounce the monastic vows. By these vows, persons who are devoted to the Roman Catholic priesthood renounce the world, with all its titles and distinctions, and pledge themselves to live a single life of poverty and humility. The wicked Colomon pronounced these vows with angry reluctance, and, even while they were yet fresh upon his lips, he formed the resolution of breaking them as soon as a convenient opportunity should occur. This disregard of vows and solemn professions was, indeed, very common in those days, among the creatures of popish intrigues.

A conscientious person would have protested against being constrained to make a profession so contrary to his feelings, though such things were frequent in the corrupt system of the Church of Rome, and, of course, productive of very bad effects. Hence it was, that so many of their monks, bishops, cardinals, and popes, have led wicked and scandalous lives.

Prince Colomon was of a bad disposition ; and, being thus compelled to act a part foreign to his inclination, he went on dissembling, and pretended that, since he had pronounced the monastic vows, he had become an altered character. Instead of giving way to violence of temper, as he had been accustomed to do in his uncle's court,

he assumed a softness of tone, and a mildness of manner, that astonished every one.

He appeared to take the greatest delight in study, and in the ceremonials of the Romish Church; so that his uncle, and many others, believed that he was perfectly satisfied with the life he had been constrained to embrace. At last, his uncle made him Bishop of Warradin, in compliance with the solicitations of the people—among whom he now passed for a very holy person.

Prince Colomon had acted this hypocritical part for the purpose of being permitted to quit the monastery, and appear once more in the court of Hungary, where it was his intention to organize a party to dispute his brother's title to the throne. In this he was successful. The right of eldership was his; and it appeared that he had been unjustly excluded in his early youth, in favour of one whose profligate conduct, after he had been declared heir to the throne, offered a very indifferent promise of what he might become, if intrusted with the sovereign power.

So artfully had Colomon concerted his plans, that, on the death of the king, his uncle, in the year 1095, he was chosen, by the general voice of the people, as his successor. On this, he threw aside the monkish cowl and the bishop's mitre, abjured his priestly vows, married a fair lady, and proclaimed himself King of Hungary.

Prince Alme's party took up arms to oppose him, and this many did out of pure love for the promising young Prince Bela, who was then seven years old, and the darling of all who knew him. The people of Dalmatia, in particular, protested against any one who had pronounced the vows of poverty, humility, self-denial, and seclu-

sion from the world, assuming the royal diadem, marrying, and living in all the pomp and splendour of a court. They, therefore, enlisted under Prince Alme's banner, and marched against the bishop-king of Hungary, as they styled Colomon.

Colomon's party was far stronger than that of Alme. He was, moreover, a person of great abilities; while Prince Alme was so weak, that he neither knew how to conduct himself, nor to give orders to others; neither would he listen to the counsels of those who were possessed of better judgment than himself. The consequence was, that his army was defeated with great loss, and himself and his young son, Bela, were made prisoners by his elder brother, the new King of Hungary.

The brothers had not met for more than fifteen years. When they last looked upon each other, there was an expression of insolent triumph in the sparkling blue eyes of Alme. It was in a public procession, where his beauty and graceful horsemanship had excited the admiration and applause of a giddy multitude, while contemptuous remarks and sarcastic glances had been levelled at the diminutive stature and deformed features of the misshapen Colomon, who rode, with sullen discontent, by his uncle's side, apparently ill at ease in his saddle, and out of temper with his horse, with the world, and with himself.

Instead of soothing and endeavouring to reason with him on the weakness of regarding such things, Alme had exulted with cruel pleasure in the mortification of his elder brother, and had mocked the bitter tears of vexation and wounded pride which he had shed on their return to the palace. Now, Colomon was triumphant, and

Alme was a weeping captive, supplicating at his feet for pity and forgiveness.

A generous foe is always ready to show compassion to a fallen adversary—and brothers have been enjoined by our blessed Lord himself, to forgive each other, not only seven offences, but seventy times seven. But neither the fear of God, nor compassion for his fellow-creatures, had any place in the hard, cold heart of Colomon of Hungary. In the pride of his triumph, and in the most cruel and heartless exercise of his power, he commanded that the eyes of Prince Alme, and those of his innocent son, Bela, should be put out with red-hot irons.

The wretched Alme pleaded for mercy for himself and his unfortunate child, with floods of tears, and pathetic supplications. But the cruel tyrant was inexorable, and in the same hour both the father and the son were deprived of sight.

A violent fever, occasioned by bodily suffering and anguish of mind, attacked the unfortunate Alme that same night, and in the course of a few hours brought him to his end. The tender child Bela was thus left a blind and helpless orphan, among pitiless foes, in the royal palace of Alba Regalis, the residence of the kings of Hungary.

The conscience of Colomon was somewhat touched with remorse, on being informed of his brother's death. But when he inquired after the child, and the attendants replied "that he also was dangerously ill," he ordered that the little sufferer should be carefully attended to. Previous to this no one had ventured to show the slightest compassion to the princely sufferer, except a young Greek slave, named Julian, who belonged to one of the officers of the royal household.

It was Julian's office to light and trim the

lamps in the chambers of the palace; to fill the ewers with water; and to place fresh flowers in the silver vases that adorned the royal ante-rooms. While thus employed, it happened that he heard the piteous moaning of the poor little prince, who had been deprived of his sight in the morning, by the orders of his wicked uncle.

Julian's kind heart had been pierced with sorrow at the relation of the king's cruelty to this guiltless child; and when he found him left all alone in his misery, in a large gloomy room, to die of grief or famine, he was filled with compassion. Though he knew it would be at the risk of sharing the same fate, if he ventured to succour the unfortunate babe, he took him in his arms and laid him on a comfortable bed, made up of down pillows and coverlids, which he removed from some of the state-beds in the adjoining apartments. He then bound up his poor eyes with fine linen, dipped in rose-water, to allay the inflammation caused by the barbarous process by which their powers of sight had been extinguished; and he soothed the terrified sufferer with tender words and caresses, till he succeeded in lulling him to sleep. He was, however, compelled to remain beside him during the whole night, for Bela had wound his little arms so closely about his neck, that Julian could not withdraw himself from his embraces, lest he should disturb the feverish slumber into which the hapless babe had fallen.

He slept, but his deep sighs and convulsive starts showed that he was still conscious of pain and terror. When he awoke, it was with a piercing cry, followed by a fit of violent trembling: and then he clung to Julian's bosom and piteously bewailed his fate. Sometimes he called on his father for aid, but more frequently did he

murmur the name of his absent mother, and implore her succour.

The name of mother touched a tender chord in the heart of the young slave ; for Julian himself had a mother—a mother whose memory was ever present to him, though she was far distant, in the land of his birth. His eyes filled with tears ; for he recalled, in idea, her beloved features, and the lowly cottage, among the green hills of Thrace, where he first beheld the light. He thought, too, of the dear companions of his childhood, with whom he used to chase the butterfly, and plait wild-flower wreaths and rushen baskets, on the banks of the sparkling mountain rill that formed the boundary of his little garden. From that loved spot he had been lured by the flattering tales of a Magyar robber, who, when he had seduced him from his home, seized and carried him over the Hungarian border, where he sold him to Cassimir, the king's chamberlain.

Julian had fortunately fallen into kind hands. His beauty and docility rendered him a great favourite in the palace, where he was caressed by every one, fared sumptuously, and was clothed in rich array, which, in those days, it was the custom for the household slaves of the great to be. Many a half-naked and hardy-fed boy, among the free children of Alba Regalis, envied the young Greek, and thought he must be the happiest creature in the world. But Julian, in the midst of the splendour and luxury with which he was surrounded, sighed for the freedom of his own humble home, and the dear ties of kindred from which he had been so cruelly beguiled ; and gladly would he have exchanged his present easy tasks for the harder duties of tilling the soil, or tending the flocks, on the bleak Thracian hills.

Julian had been educated in habits of virtue and piety by his beloved parent, and he was shocked at the wickedness and forgetfulness of God in which the royal household of Alba Regalis had lived since the death of the good King Uladislaus. The crimes which the tyrant Colomon had that day committed, had inspired him with such horror, that he had privately resolved to make his escape from the palace; for he could not endure to perform, for such a monster, any service, however easy it might be.

He had even gone so far as to meditate a flight from Alba Regalis that same night; and, perhaps, he would have carried his design into effect, if compassion for the hapless young prince had not detained him.

CHAPTER III.

CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN JULIAN AND BELA THE BLIND.—THE PRINCESS ISABELLA EXCITES AN INSURRECTION IN FAVOUR OF HER SON BELA.—THE INSURRECTION DEFEATED BY COLOMON.—HIS CRUEL CONDUCT AFTER VICTORY.—HE CONTEMPLATES THE MURDER OF BELA THE BLIND.

FOR several days and nights Julian privily nursed and tended the royal child with the tenderest sympathy, till the fever and delirium which had been brought on by pain and terror, subsided, and the rosy tints of health began to revisit Bela's pale cheek. His soft eyes resumed a mournful beauty, though their light was for ever extinguished.

One day he whispered to Julian, "What a long, long night this seems! I wish the morning would dawn."

"Dear child, it is morning now," said Julian; "for the sun has risen some hours, and is now high in the heavens."

"Does the sun shine in darkness, then?" asked Bela, anxiously.

"To those who cannot behold his beams, he does," replied Julian.

"And why cannot I behold them?" asked Bela. "I feel his warm beams upon my cheek as pleasantly as when I used to gaze upon his glory in the blue heavens. Oh! how I used to watch the many-coloured clouds in the west, on summer evenings, as they floated by, and reflected their bright hues in the glad waves of the mighty Danube, while I was sporting on its banks with my mother and the nurse. And where are they?"

"Alas, poor child," thought Julian, "how many are thy bereavements, and have I dared to repine at the trifling hardships of *my* lot!"

"You do not speak," continued Bela, shaking Julian's arm. "Oh! if you had a dear, kind mother, whom you had not seen for so many, many long, dark days, you would be glad to hear something of her—I know you would; why, then, will you not tell me of mine?"

"My little lord," replied Julian, bursting into tears, "I am, like yourself, a captive among strangers. I have a dear, dear mother, too; but I have been torn from my home; she is with my brethren and my sisters in a far land; and I may never see her again."

"I am very sorry for you," said the little prince; "you are crying, I know, for I feel your warm tears falling, like rain drops, on my face. If I could but see you, I would wipe them all away, for I do not like any one that is so good and

"And as you are, to cry. You must tell me your name, poor captive; for though I love you so very much, I do not know who you are. Is it not strange that I should love one whom I have never seen?"

"Do you love me, then, so very much, dear child?" asked Julian, pressing the young prince to his bosom.

"Oh yes, I do, indeed," replied Bela, covering him with kisses; "and the reason why I want the light to come into my eyes again is, because I should like so very much to look upon you, to see if your face is as pretty as your voice is beautiful."

"Is my voice, then, pleasant to your ear, my prince?" said Julian.

"Yes, it is better than the sweetest music," replied Bela; "and I love to hear your nice, soft steps, too. Oh! how I listen for their returning sound, when you leave me here all alone in darkness, and I have nothing to amuse me but the sad thoughts that make me weep and tremble."

"And what are those thoughts, poor child?" asked Julian compassionately.

"I think," said Bela, drawing very close to him, "I think of the frightful dream I dreamed some nights ago, about that terrible looking man, with the hump on his shouder, and the scowling brow, who treated my poor father and me so cruelly. Sometimes I fancy it was no dream, but that it really happened; for I have never been able to see anything since that time, and as you say the sun shines, and that you can see the light, then must the darkness be in myself."

"It is as you say, my prince," replied Julian;

"the king, your uncle, caused you to be deprived of sight, on the day of which you speak."

"And why was he so cruel? I am sure I never did him any harm. Though I was frightened at his ugliness, I did not say a word of that, but knelt down by my dear father's side, and held up my hands to him for mercy, as my father bade me. I remember it all now. But where is my poor father?"

Then Julian told the young prince, but very tenderly, that his father was dead; that he himself was a captive; and that if his uncle came to see him, he must behave himself meekly, or the ruthless tyrant would certainly put him to a cruel death.

"But may I not tell him of his wickedness in depriving me of my dear father?" asked the weeping boy.

"No," replied Julian, "you must not mention your father's name. You must promise to be a good and loyal subject to him, or he will certainly kill you, and that would break your poor mother's heart."

"I shall never see *her* again," sobbed Bela.

"But she may see you, and you may hear her sweet voice, asking from Heaven blessings on your head," said Julian, "if you are but patient under this calamity."

"My father used to tell me I should be a king," said Bela; "but that can never be, now that I am blind."

"Kings are not always so happy as peasants," replied Julian. "I have seen enough of a palace since I have been in bondage to Cassimir, the King of Hungary's chamberlain, to make me prize the calm content of a peaceful cottage, where God is feared and loved, and where He

sends his blessing on the daily bread which is earned by the honest toil of those who serve Him in holiness and truth."

"Will God love me?" asked Bela.

"Yes, if you seek his grace, He will," said Julian. "Though your eyes can no more behold his glorious works, the sun and moon, and this beautiful earth on which we live, yet He can shed that light upon your heart which will teach you to discern his wisdom and goodness, in saving you from many temptations; so that you shall be able to say in the end, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted.'"

"It comforts me to hear you talk of God," said the blind prince; "but who taught you to love Him?"

"My mother," replied Julian.

"Your mother, then, is better than my mother," observed the prince, "for she never talked to me about God. My kind nurse taught me to say my prayers, and bade me be good that God might bless me; but I don't think I cared enough for these things when I was well and happy."

"God chasteneth those who forget Him, to bring them to a knowledge of his power and majesty," said Julian. "Seek him, and your present darkness shall become light and glory to you."

"Pray to Him with me, and for me," said the prince, "that He would teach me to love and fear Him."

"And to forgive your enemies," added Julian.

"Yes, all but my wicked uncle, Colomon," replied Bela.

"It is for him that you must pray more especially," said Julian; "for he hath more need of your prayers than any other, since his wickedness

is so great, that if he be cut off in his present sins, he must perish everlastingly."

"But should I not hate wicked people?" asked the prince.

"You should think with abhorrence on their crimes, Prince Bela, but on themselves with pity and regret, that they should transgress God's holy commandments, and provoke his dreadful judgments upon their miserable souls," replied Julian.

It was thus that Julian was accustomed to discourse with the blind prince, and endeavour to lead him to a knowledge of the divine precepts of his Redeemer, in which Bela had been but imperfectly instructed before the deprivation of his sight. Bela, young as he was, felt a soothing comfort and a holy peace infused into his heart.

Meantime Bela was neither forgotten nor abandoned by his friends. The cruel tyranny of Colomon had given great offence to the generous nobles of Hungary, by whom he was regarded with horror, as the murderer of his brother, and the inexorable jailer of his innocent nephew. The widowed Princess Isabella, the mother of the blind Bela, appealed to the people in behalf of her ill-treated son, whom she styled the rightful King of Hungary, alleging that Colomon, as a priest and bishop, though he was the eldest son of King Grisa, had no business to assume the crown.

At length she raised the banner of her son, and there was an immediate insurrection in his favour, throughout the kingdom of Hungary, except in the city of Alba Regalis, where Colomon kept his court. Now Colomon had obtained what is called a dispensation from his vows, from the Pope, whom he had bribed to favour his cause. He was the master of all the wealth of Hungary, too,

with which he raised so large an army, that he defeated the forces of the Princess Isabella, and presently subdued the rebellion, and put all those to death among his nobles whom he suspected of having secretly aided her.

There was one among these whom he did not suspect, but who was in reality the friend of his unfortunate nephew. This was Cassimir, his chamberlain, whom the slave Julian had been the means of interesting for the captive prince, by inducing him to visit him occasionally in his lonely prison-room.

The beauty, the tender youth, the meekness, the patience, and angelic sweetness with which the blind prince supported his manifold calamities, could not be witnessed by any one possessed of the common feelings of humanity, without emotions of the deepest sympathy and compassion.

Cassimir was a kind man, and he had permitted Julian to devote all his time to the amusement and solace of the royal captive's lonely hours. He had also indulged Bela with musical instruments, a pet bird, a dog, and many other little comforts, unknown to the jealous tyrant, Colomon, who very rarely visited the apartments wherein his hapless victim had been confined for nearly three years.

The late insurrection in favour of the blind prince, his nephew, was an excuse to Colomon for conceiving a wicked design against the helpless child. On the evening of his return to Alba Regalis, after putting down the rebellion, he sent for Cassimir into his chamber, and opened the matter to him in these words:

"Cassimir, there will never be peace in Hungary while the son of Alme lives."

"Doth the mighty King of Hungary fear a

blind and feeble babe?" asked the chamberlain.

"Fool! dost thou imagine that I apprehend aught from the brat himself?" rejoined Colomon, knitting his shaggy brows; "but his name is a watchword and a rallying cry to the factious and discontented. So it ever will be while he lives; and therefore he must die?"

"Oh! my lord," replied Cassimir, "his murder would raise an army against you, to avenge the iniquity of cutting off a creature so innocent and unfortunate, and one who is so near to you in blood withal."

"Art thou, also, among his partizans?" asked Colomon, with a malignant scowl.

"My lord," replied Cassimir, "I have always maintained that you, as the elder son of my late lord, King Grisa, were the only lawful King of Hungary; and I think I have given sufficient proofs of my loyalty and affection to your person, in assisting to put down the late rebellion."

"Thou must give me yet another," said the king; "thou must rid me of this rival claimant of the throne of Hungary, and the choicest honours and the fairest lands in my realm shall be thy reward. But if thou dost oppose me in this matter, Cassimir, then look to thyself."

"Far be it from the most faithful of his servants to dispute the will of the great King of Hungary," replied Cassimir, bowing his stately form before the deformed, crook-backed monster, in whose presence the mighty warriors and noble senators of Hungary trembled; though they condescended to dissemble their sentiments, because they regarded the fear of man rather than the fear of God.

CHAPTER IV.

CASSIMIR, BEING ABOUT TO PUT BELA TO DEATH, IS OVERCOME BY HIS PIETY AND SWEETNESS.—BELA ESCAPES WITH JULIAN.—ARRIVES SAFELY IN THRACE.—KEEPS SHEEP UPON THE THRACIAN HILLS.—AFTER MANY YEARS' EXILE, IS CALLED TO THE THRONE, AND CROWNED KING OF HUNGARY.

CASSIMIR went straightway from the presence of his cruel master into the prison-room where Bela was confined; and, having been greatly troubled and dismayed by the threats of Colomon, debated within himself whether it would not be most prudent to save his own life by the sacrifice of the helpless little captive. "I have," said he, "a wife and many children, who would be ruined if the tyrant thought proper to put me to death for disputing his commands; life can be of but little value to this poor, blind captive, whom I can destroy, while he sleeps, without inflicting a moment's pain; and by so doing, I shall put an end to civil war and bloodshed in my unhappy country."

While Cassimir was thus deceiving his own conscience, by endeavouring to reconcile himself to the commission of the wickedness which the king had enjoined him to do, he softly entered the apartment wherein the young prince was lodged, thinking to find him in bed and asleep. It happened, however, that Bela was neither in bed nor sleeping, but engaged in the service of that God in whose keeping he was safe, though in the strong-hold of his foe. Julian, who had been reading passages from a book of devotion, was kneeling by his side, while the blind prince, ac-

companying his soft, sweet voice with a lute, which he held on his arm, sang the following

HYMN OF THE BLIND.

Great God ! these darkened orbs of mine
Thy works no longer see ;
And sun, and moon, and planets shine
No longer now for me.

But though the bright, the glorious day,
To me is ever night,
Yet Thou canst shed a heavenly ray,
To make that darkness light.

Father, no other light I seek
Than Thy redeeming grace ;
Then turn upon the blind and weak
The brightness of Thy face.

Oh, bid my kindling spirit rise,
From earthly thralls set free,
And fix these dim, extinguished eyes,
For ever, Lord, on Thee !

There was a holy and divine expression in Bela's face, as he sang his artless song of prayer and praise—an expression that might have suited an angel's countenance. The eyes of Cassimir filled with tears, as he gazed upon him, and the purpose that he had meditated against him was changed. He felt that the child was under the protection of his heavenly Father ; and though he held a naked sword in his hand, he was withheld from lifting it against him. A sweet smile stole over the mild features of the captive prince as he advanced ; and turning his sightless eyes upon him, with a look of confiding affection, he said—

“It is my Lord Cassimir, who hath kindly come to visit the blind. I know his stately step. It is not so soft a step as thine, Julian, for it is

the tread of a warrior—but it is pleasant to mine ear.”

The heart of Cassimir smote him at these words; and wrapping his arms about Bela, he gave vent to his feelings, and wept aloud.

“Why do you weep, my Lord Cassimir?” asked the blind prince, tenderly caressing the conscience-stricken chamberlain.

“Because, my royal boy, I was sent hither on a cruel errand.”

“Was it to slay me?” asked Bela, in a firm voice; but the colour faded from his cheek as he spoke.

“It was,” replied Cassimir.

“But you will not—you dare not—do such great wickedness, my lord?” cried Julian, starting from his knees, and looking round, as if in search of some weapon wherewith to defend his young friend.

“If it be for the good of my country, and the will of God, I am willing to die,” said Bela, after a short pause.

“No,” replied Cassimir, “God will preserve thee, I trust, to be the blessing of Hungary: I will sooner die than injure one hair of thy head, thou noble and valiant boy.”

“But my uncle, Colomon, will slay me by some other hand, if not by thine,” observed the prince.

“He shall not,” exclaimed Cassimir. “I will preserve thee, though I die for it; and, more than that, I will deliver thee from his hands.”

“But how can that be?” asked Julian, eagerly.

“Julian,” said his lord, “I must leave it to thy wisdom to contrive a plan for Prince Bela’s escape from the palace and city of Alba Regalis; yea, and from the Hungarian dominions also

Behold, I give thee thy freedom, and this purse of gold. Now do what seemeth best to thee."

"I will dress the prince in the apparel of the little slave, Irene, my countrywoman," replied Julian, "and will cover his face with her veil, and so will I conduct him into mine own country of Thrace, where he shall dwell with me in my mother's cottage."

"Be it so," replied Cassimir; "but see you betray not the secret of his royal birth, for the day may come when Hungary will demand the blind Bela for her king."

In the dead of night the young prince, disguised, as Julian had suggested, in the habit of a girl, and closely veiled, quitted the palace of his royal ancestors, attended only by the faithful Julian, and clinging to his arm for support, traversed the lonely streets of Alba Regalis, under the cover of thick darkness.

They were challenged at the city gates by the sentinels; but Cassimir had given Julian the watchword for the night. When, therefore, he said, "Open in the name of the king," the armed sentinel at the gate allowed them to pass.

Julian, who had been accustomed to travel in the train of his lord, was well acquainted with the country in which the city of Alba Regalis was situated. This country is now called by the modern Germans, Weissenburg. It is a vast plain, and, being near the conflux of many rivers, abounds in marshes, which, in the darkness, would have been very dangerous to any one who was not familiar with the road; but Julian guided his blind companion in safety, till they reached the next town. Bela was by that time greatly fatigued; for he had been so long a captive, pent up within the narrow limits of a prison-room, that,

from disease, added to his blindness, he walked in doubt and difficulty.

Julian, having been amply provided with money by his lord, was enabled to obtain good accommodations, both for himself and Bela, who, being in the disguise of a female, travelled with him as his sister. He would not, of course, allow him to raise the veil that shaded his features.

The next morning they joined themselves to a caravan of merchants, who were travelling in company, for security, with woollen goods, to Constantinople, which is situated in Thrace, now called Romania. With these traders the youthful fugitives crossed the mighty Danube, traversed the wild country of Bulgaria, and, after four days' journey, safely arrived in the hill-country of Thrace.

On the morning after their escape, Cassimir, who was compelled both for his own sake and the safety of the young prince, to act the part of a dissembler, entered the presence of the tyrant Coloman, with his hands and garments stained with blood, and so presented himself by the king's bed-side.

"Is it done?" asked the king, raising himself on his elbow, and bending a searching glance on the pale face of the chamberlain, who was full of terror, for fear of his vengeance.

"It is!" replied Cassimir, in a faltering voice. "Do you desire to look upon the corpse of the blind prince?"

A sudden pang of remorse shot through the hard heart of the tyrant at these words—"the blind prince;" for he thought of his previous barbarity in depriving the innocent child, who had never offended or displeased him, of his sight. He remembered the touching beauty and plead g

looks of the helpless boy, when he knelt by his father's side, and besought his pity for them both; and, wicked as he was, the recollection of that scene, and of his own relentless cruelty, rendered him so miserable, that he said, and he shuddered as he spoke,

"I cannot look upon the child. Bury him privily, where no one may find his grave, and let me hear his name no more."

But the name of Bela was not forgotten in Hungary. The report of his death was spread abroad, and believed by some, though there was a general rumour that he had escaped from his cruel uncle's power. The widowed mother of the blind prince, however, still cherished a lingering hope that her fair son yet lived, and would one day sway the sceptre of Hungary.

That child, meantime, under the guiding care and protection of the faithful Julian, had safely reached the humble cottage, among the mountains of Thrace, where the mother of the enfranchised Greek slave dwelt. The care-worn matron, who still mourned the loss of her first-born with a grief which only a mother's heart can conceive, had assembled her younger children around her for evening prayer; for it was the hour of sunset. Just as she had concluded her petition to the throne of grace, as she always did, with a prayer for her eldest son—and that it would please God, in his mercy, to restore him to her arms—one of her little girls looked up and discovered Julian, with his weary companion, before the cottage door.

"Oh, mother, mother!" she exclaimed, "Julian has come back to us again!"

"God hath heard and answered the widow's prayer!" cried the mother, clasping to her breast

her long-lost son, who folded his arms about his mother's neck, and wept for joy at beholding her again. He then kissed and tenderly embraced his brethren and his sisters, who gathered round him with rapturous delight. They asked him a thousand questions, such as, where he had been, and why he had left them?—but, above all, they were desirous of learning who his blind companion was.

“He is my brother,” said Julian. “Nay, now you mock us, Julian,” replied one of his sisters, “for we know how many brothers we have, and surely this blind girl is neither brother nor sister of ours.”

Then Julian approached Bela, who still wore the disguise of a female, and leading him to his mother, he whispered to her, “Cherish this poor exile, my mother, and have a tender care of him. Though dressed as a female, he is the son of a king, whom his cruel uncle hath deprived of sight, and would have slain; but God hath been pleased to make me the instrument of his deliverance.”

Then the kind matron promised that Bela should be to her as a son; and, according to the hospitable custom of those days, she fetched water to bathe his weary feet; set food before him; and provided him with the best bed the cottage afforded.

And Bela dwelt in that cottage, and kept sheep on the Thracian hills, with his friend and kind preserver, Julian, in peace and tranquillity, for twenty years, while the storms of civil war devastated the land of Hungary, and the remorse of his guilty conscience haunted the cruel tyrant, his uncle, by day, and deprived his pillow of rest at night. At length he died, hated and abhorred

by all his subjects. His young son, Stephen, succeeded to the throne, but he also proved to be so wicked, that the magnates of Hungary deposed him, and commenced a general search for their lost heir, Bela the Blind.

Bela was still living in the lonely cottage, with his Thracian friends. Julian had married, and was the father of a blooming family of children, who were the delight and pleasure of the exiled Hungarian prince. One little girl among them was his constant companion, and used to lead him by the hand wherever he went; and these two always kept the sheep together on the hill, while Julian and his boys were employed in tilling the soil.

One lovely summer evening, in the year 1131, when they had all returned, hot and weary with the toils of the day, and Bela, who was less tired than the rest, had taken up his lute, and was singing the Hymn of the Blind, to please the children, a party of richly-dressed strangers were seen approaching the lowly dwelling.

Julian started from his seat in astonishment; for he knew by their dresses that these were Hungarian nobles of the highest rank. But, in the lapse of years, he had forgotten the person of the foremost among them, whose raven locks time had blanched to silvery whiteness, and whose tall form was bent with the weight of years. This dignified person, leaving his companions in the porch, entered the cottage, leading by the hand an aged lady in a widow's dress.

The memory of Bela, the blind Bela, was more faithful to the past than that of Julian. Raising his sightless eyes to the face of the advancing stranger, he said—

“It is my lord Cassimir, the Chamberlain of

Hungary. I still know his step. But who cometh with him?"

"Thy mother, royal Bela," replied Cassimir, "who, after a separation of five-and-thirty years, lives to embrace her son once more; yea, and to behold his brows encircled with the royal diadem of Hungary. Thou art called, prince, by the voice of the people, to the throne, from which thy wicked uncle's worthless son hath been deposed; and I am the first of thy subjects to offer a liegeman's homage to my king."

Bela tenderly embraced his weeping mother, and graciously saluted his new subjects. He would fain have declined the royal power that was thus offered to his acceptance; but the persuasions of his mother and the nobles prevailed upon him to ascend the throne; and, a few days after, he was solemnly crowned in the cathedral of Alba Regalis.

Julian was continued in the confidence of the king, and became one of the first lords of his court. He remained, as he always had been, eyes to the blind, and the most faithfully attached and beloved of all the royal Bela's friends.

Bela also liberally rewarded every one who had shown compassion to him during his distress. Having improved the sweet uses of adversity, he became, in his prosperity, a bright example of meekness, humility, piety, and every virtue that can render a monarch worthy of his people's love; so that the name of "Bela the Blind" is to this day endeared to the hearts of the Hungarians, though Hungary is no longer an independent kingdom, but is now annexed to the dominions of the Emperor of Austria.

PRINCE EDWIN AND HIS PAGE.

A TALE OF THE ANGLO-SAXONS.

CHAPTER I.

COURT OF KING ATHELSTANE.—WIDOW AND SON OF CENDRIC.—
THE KING SENDS WILFRID TO COLLEGE.—PRINCE EDWIN.—
OXFORD COLLEGE.—BRITHRIC.

ON a certain high festival, which was set apart by our Saxon monarchs for receiving the petitions of the poor, and the appeals of such of their subjects as had any cause of complaint, the great King Athelstane sat enthroned in royal state, to listen to the applications of all who came to prefer their suits to him.

In one corner of the hall stood a noble-looking Saxon lady, dressed in deep mourning, and holding a little boy by the hand. The lady was evidently a widow, and of high rank, for she wore a widow's hood and barb,—the barb, a piece of white lawn, that covered the lower part of the face, being worn only by widows of high degree. The little boy, too, was also arrayed in black attire; his youthful countenance bore an expression of the utmost grief, and his large blue eyes were full of tears. This sorrowful pair did not press forward like the other petitioners, but kept at a modest distance from the throne, evidently wait

PRINCE EDWIN AND HIS PAGE.



The widowed Mother begging protection.



Wilfrid shipwrecked.

ing for the king to give them some encouraging signal, before they ventured to approach him.

The royal Athelstane's attention was at length attracted by the anxious glances which both mother and son bent upon him; and as he perceived that they were in distress, he waved his hand for them to draw near.

"Who are ye?" said the king, when the mournful widow and her son, in obedience to his encouraging sign, advanced, and bowed the knee before him.

"Will my royal lord be graciously pleased to answer me one question, before I reply to that which he has asked of me?" said the Saxon lady.

"Speak on," replied King Athelstane.

"Is it just that the innocent should suffer for the guilty, O King?" said she.

"Assuredly not," replied the king.

"Then, wherefore," said the Saxon lady, "hast thou deprived my son, Wilfrid, of his inheritance, for the fault of his father? Cendric has already paid the forfeit of his life, for having unhappily leagued himself with a traitor who plotted against thy royal life; but this boy, his guiltless orphan, did never offend thee! Why, then, should he be doomed to poverty and contempt?"

"It was the crime of the traitor Cendric, not my will, that deprived his son of his inheritance," said the king.

"I acknowledge it with grief, my royal lord," said Ermengarde, for that was the name of the Saxon widow; "but it rests with thy good pleasure to restore to his innocent child the forfeit lands of the unhappy Cendric."

"Is this boy the son of the traitor Cendric?"

asked the king, placing his hand on the head of the weeping Wilfrid.

"He is, my gracious lord," replied Ermen-garde. "He has been carefully brought up in the fear of God, and I, his widowed mother, will be surety to thee, that the boy shall serve thee truly and faithfully all the days of his life, if thou wilt but restore him to his inheritance."

"Widow of Cendric, listen to me," said the king. "Thy husband plotted with traitors to deprive me of my crown and my life; and the laws of his country, which he had broken, doomed him to death, and confiscated his lands and castles to my use. I might retain them in my own hands, if it were my pleasure so to do; but I will only hold them in trust for thy son, whom I will make my ward, and place in the college at Oxford. If he there conducts himself to my satisfaction, I will, when he comes of age, restore to him the forfeited lands of his father, Cendric."

Ermengarde and Wilfrid threw themselves at the feet of the gracious Athelstane, and returned their tearful thanks for his goodness.

"Wilfrid," said the king, "your fortunes are now in your own hands; and it depends on your own conduct whether you become a mighty thane or a landless outcast. Remember, it is always in the power of a virtuous son, to blot out the reproach which the crimes of a wicked parent may have cast upon his name."

The words of King Athelstane were as balm to the broken spirit of the boy, and they were never forgotten by him in all the trials, many of them grievous ones, which awaited him in after-life.

King Athelstane, and his brother, Prince Edwin, were sons of King Edward, surnamed the

Elder, the son and successor of Alfred the Great. After a glorious reign, Edward died in the year of our Lord 925, and at his death a great dispute arose among the nobles, as to which of his sons should succeed him in the royal dignity.

Athelstane had early distinguished himself by his valour in battle, his wisdom in council, and by so many princely actions, that he was the darling of the people. His grandfather, the great Alfred, had, therefore, on his death-bed, adjudged Athelstane to be the most suitable of all Edward's sons to reign over England. There were, however, some of the Saxon lords who objected to Athelstane being made king, because he was born before King Edward's royal marriage with the reigning queen; Athelstane's mother, Egwina, having been only a poor shepherd's daughter. They wished, therefore, that Prince Edwin, the eldest son of King Edward's queen, should be declared king; but as Edwin was very young, the people decided on crowning Athelstane, he being of a proper age to govern.

This election was very displeasing to some of the proud Saxon lords; and Cendric, the father of Wilfrid, had been among those who conspired with a wicked traitor, of the name of Alfred, to take away the life of Athelstane. The conspiracy was discovered, and all who were engaged in it were punished with death.

The college in which Wilfrid was placed at Oxford, had been founded by Alfred the Great, for the education of the youthful nobles and gentles of the land. It had been deemed the most proper place for the education of the king's younger brother, Prince Edwin, and some other royal wards, for the most part sons of Anglo-Saxon and Danish nobles, whose persons and

estates had been committed to the guardianship of the king during their minority. King Athelstane, who, like his grandfather, Alfred the Great, was very desirous of promoting learning, had provided suitable masters for their instruction in every branch of knowledge. Leaving, therefore, men of distinguished learning, and of great wisdom, to conduct the education, and form the minds and morals of this youthful community; and being himself engaged in the cares of government, and in repelling the attacks of the Danes, the king limited his further attention to occasional inquiries after the health and improvement of his brother, and the rest of the royal wards.

He had, indeed, taken the pains to draw up the rules, which he deemed proper to be observed in this juvenile society. One of the most important of these, namely, that a system of perfect equality should be observed towards all the individuals of whom it was composed, was, however, soon violated in favour of Prince Edwin, who, because he was the *Atheling*, as the heir apparent to the throne was called in those days, was honoured with peculiar marks of distinction. Every person in the college, from the masters to the humblest servitor, appeared desirous of winning the favour of the future sovereign, and of this Edwin too soon became aware.

Prince Edwin was the leader of the sports, and no amusement was adopted unless his approbation had previously been asked and obtained. All disputed matters were referred to his decision, and no appeal from his judgment was permitted.

It would have afforded subject of serious reflection, perhaps of jealous alarm, to the king, had he been aware of the injudicious courses which were pursued by those around Prince

Edwin; but Athelstane was engaged in bloody wars with the Danes, and the insurgent Welsh princes, which kept him far remote from Oxford. His brother, meanwhile, continued to receive the most pernicious flattery from every creature around him, except Wilfrid, the son of Cendric, who, by order of King Athelstane, had been appointed his page of honour.

When Wilfrid was first admitted into the college, he was treated with great scorn by the royal wards. Among them were many, who, in the pride of circumstance and the vanity of youth, were so unkind as to cherish disdainful feelings against the unfortunate Wilfrid, and to murmur at his introduction into their society.

Prince Edwin was, however, of a more generous disposition, and by extending his favour and protection to the forlorn youth, rendered his residence in the college less irksome than it otherwise would have been. But the very affection with which Wilfrid was regarded by his young lord, had the effect of increasing the hostile feeling of the others against him; and in the absence of the Atheling, he had to endure a thousand bitter taunts and cruel insults respecting his father's crime, and the ignominious death he had suffered.

Wilfrid was too noble-minded to complain to his young lord of this treatment, although he felt it deeply. It required all his firmness and forbearance to endure it patiently: but he remembered the words of King Athelstane—"that his future fortunes depended upon his own conduct;" and he resolved, under all circumstances, to persevere in the path of duty; and, if possible, by his own virtues, to blot out the remembrance of his father's fault. He was also duly impressed with a grateful sense of the king's goodness, in extend-

ing to him the advantages of a liberal and courtly education; of which he wisely determined to make the most he could. By unremitting exertions, he soon made so rapid a progress in his studies, that he outstripped all his fellow-students; and, though the youngest boy in the college, he obtained the highest place of all, except the seat of honour, which his partial preceptors allowed Prince Edwin to retain.

Prince Edwin loved Wilfrid, and took real pleasure in witnessing his repeated triumphs over those who regarded him with such unkindly feelings. But Prince Edwin himself was proud and capricious—his naturally frank and noble disposition having been spoiled by the adulation of those about him; and Wilfrid was, perhaps, more than any other person, exposed to suffer from his occasional fits of passion. Yet Wilfrid was the only person who ventured to represent to him the folly and impropriety of conduct, so unbecoming in any one, but peculiarly unwise in a prince, who, on account of his elevated rank, and the respect with which he was treated, is required to practise universal courtesy, and to avoid, if possible, giving offence to any one.

Prince Edwin, though often piqued at the plain dealing of his page, knew how to value his sincerity and attachment. However he might, at times, give way to petulance towards him, he treated him, on the whole, with greater consideration, and paid more attention to his opinions than to those of any other person. The regard of Prince Edwin for his page was, however, soon observed with jealous displeasure by one of the royal wards, named Brithric, who was older by two or three years than any of the other young companions of the prince.

CHAPTER II.

THE UNKINDNESS OF PRINCE EDWIN TOWARDS WILFRID.—BASE CONDUCT OF BRITHRIC.—SCENE IN THE ARCHERY-GROUND.—WILFRID CLEAVES THE ARROW OF THE PRINCE.—HIS MORTIFICATION THEREON, AND ALTERED CONDUCT TO WILFRID.

BRITHRIC was a youth of a specious and deceitful character: it was his practice to dissemble his real sentiments, and to recommend himself, by flattering speeches, to the favour of his superiors. By constantly addressing Prince Edwin in the language of adulation, he succeeded in rendering his company very agreeable to him; for the prince's besetting sin was vanity, and the artful Brithric was only too well skilled in perceiving and taking advantage of the weak points of others.

Wilfrid beheld this growing intimacy with pain; nor did he attempt to conceal his uneasiness whenever the prince spoke to him on the subject of his evident dislike of the society of Brithric. "I do not respect Brithric, my lord," replied Wilfrid; "and where esteem is wanting, there can be no true grounds for forming friendships."

"And what are your reasons, Wilfrid, for denying your esteem to Brithric?" said the prince. "He is obliging, and often says very agreeable things to you."

"It costs more to win my esteem than a few unmeaning compliments, which Brithric is accustomed to pay to every one with whom he is desirous of carrying his point," said Wilfrid.

"And what should Brithric, who is the heir of

the richest thane in my brother's court, want to gain of a poor, landless orphan, who owes his sustenance and education to the compassion of King Athelstane?" retorted the prince, angrily.

The pale cheek of Wilfrid flushed with unwonted crimson at this unexpected taunt from the lips of his young lord. It was with difficulty that he restrained the tears which filled his eyes from overflowing, but turning meekly away, he said—

"It is the first time the Atheling has condescended to upbraid his page with the bounty of his royal brother, the generous Athelstane, whom may Heaven long preserve and bless."

"It is good policy, methinks, for the son of a traitor to speak loudly of his loyalty to the mighty Athelstane," said Brithric, who, having entered unperceived, was listening to this conversation.

"Nay, Brithric," said the prince, "Wilfrid could not help his father's fault; though the remembrance of his crime and punishment ought to restrain him from offering his opinion too boldly, when speaking of the friends of his lord."

"Let every one be judged by his own deeds," replied Wilfrid. "My unfortunate parent offended against the laws of his country, and has suffered the penalty decreed to those who do so, by the loss of life and forfeiture of lands. As a further punishment, I, his only child, who was born the heir of a fair patrimony, am reared in a state of servitude and sorrow; and am doomed, not only to mourn my early bereavement of a father's care, and my hard reverse of fortune, but to endure the taunts of those who are unkind enough to reproach me with the sore calamities, which, without any fault of mine, have fallen upon my youthful head."

The voice of Wilfrid failed him as he concluded, and he burst into a flood of tears.

The heart of Prince Edwin smote him for the pain he had inflicted upon his faithful page; but he was too proud to acknowledge his fault. He could not, however, bear to look upon his tears; so he left him to indulge them in solitude, and taking the ready arm of Brithric, strolled into the archery-ground to amuse himself by shooting at a mark.

His hand was unsteady and his aim uncertain that day, yet Brithric's voice was louder than ever in praising the skill of the Atheling. The rest of the royal wards took their cue from the bold flatterer, and addressed to the prince the most extravagant compliments every time his arrow came near the mark, which they all purposely abstained from hitting.

At that moment, the pale, sorrowful Wilfrid crossed the ground; but, wishing to escape the attention of the joyous group, he kept at a distance. The prince, however, observed him, and, willing to obliterate the remembrance of his late unkindness, called to him in a lively voice: "Come hither, Wilfrid," said he, "and tell me if you think you could send an arrow nearer to yonder mark than I have done."

"Certainly," replied Wilfrid, "or I should prove myself but a bad archer."

The group of youthful flatterers, who surrounded the heir of the throne, smiled contemptuously at the unguarded sincerity of the page in speaking the truth thus openly and plainly to his lord.

"Wilfrid, if we may believe his own testimony, is not only wiser and better than any of the servants of the Atheling," said Brithric, scornfully, "but excels even the royal Atheling himself, in all the exercises of princely skill."

"He has yet to prove his boast," replied the prince, colouring with suppressed anger; "but give him his bow, Brithric," continued he, "that we may all have the advantage of taking a lesson from so peerless an archer."

"It is far from my wish presumptuously to compete with my lord," replied Wilfrid, calmly rejecting the bow.

"He has boasted that which he cannot perform," said Brithric, with an insulting laugh.

"You are welcome to that opinion, Brithric, if it so please you," said Wilfrid, turning about to quit the ground.

"Nay," cried the prince, "you go not till you have made good your boast, young sir, by sending an arrow nearer to the mark than mine."

"Ay, royal Atheling," shouted the company, "compel the vaunter to show us a sample of his skill."

"Rather, let my lord, the Atheling, try his own skill once more," said Wilfrid; "he can hit the mark himself, if he will."

Prince Edwin bent his bow, and this time the arrow entered the centre of the target. The ground rang with the plaudits of the spectators.

"Let us see now if Wilfrid, the son of Cendric, the traitor, can equal the Atheling's shot," shouted Brithric.

"Shoot, Wilfrid, shoot!" cried more than twenty voices among the royal wards.

"I have no wish to bend the bow to-day," said Wilfrid.

"Because you know that you must expose yourself to contempt, by failing to make your vaunt good," said Brithric; "but you shall not escape thus lightly."

"Nothing but the express command of the

prince, my master, will induce me to bend my bow to-day," said Wilfrid.

"Wilfrid, son of Cendric, I, Edwin Atheling, command thee to shoot at yonder mark," said the prince.

Wilfrid bowed his head in obedience to the mandate. He fitted the arrow to the string, and stepping a pace backward, took his aim, and bent the bow. The arrow flew unerringly, and cleft in twain that of Prince Edwin which already remained fixed in the centre of the mark.

This feat of skilful archery on the part of the page, called forth no shout, nor even a word of applause, from the partial group of flatterers, who had so loudly commended the Atheling's less successful shots. Their silence, however, was best pleasing to the modest Wilfrid, who, without so much as casting a single triumphant glance upon those who had insulted and reviled him, dropped his bow upon the earth, and, bowing to his royal master, retired from the scene, without uttering a syllable.

From that day there was a visible change in the manners of the Atheling towards his page, for his vanity had been piqued by this trifling circumstance, of which the artful Brithric took advantage to irritate his mind against Wilfrid. He now addressed him only in the language of imperious command, and not unfrequently treated him with personal indignity.

Wilfrid felt these things very acutely, and the more so because the former kindness of his youthful lord had won his earliest affections. But he now bore all his capricious changes of temper with meekness. It was only in his unrestrained confidence with his widowed mother, that he ever uttered a complaint of the young Atheling, and

then he spoke of him in sorrow, not in anger; for he rightly attributed much of Prince Edwin's unamiable conduct to the pernicious influence which the artful Brithric had, through flattery, obtained over his mind.

"Patience, my son," would the widowed Ermengarde say, in those moments when Wilfrid sought relief by venting his anguish in tears on the bosom of his tender mother, "patience, my son: true greatness is shown most especially in enduring with magnanimity the crosses and trials which are of every-day occurrence. Let sorrow, sickness, or any other adversity, touch Prince Edwin, and he will learn the difference between a true friend and a false flatterer. In due time, your worth will be proved, and your victory will be a glorious one: for it will be the triumph of virtue!"

CHAPTER III.

PRINCE EDWIN ATTACKED BY A MALIGNANT FEVER.—DESERTED BY ALL, EXCEPT WILFRID.—RECOVERS, AND RENEWS HIS FRIENDSHIP WITH HIS PAGE.—TRAITOROUS PROPOSALS OF BRITHRIC.—HE IS REPULSED BY THE PRINCE, WHOM HE FALSELY ACCUSES TO THE KING.—THE CONSEQUENCES THEREOF.

THE day which Ermengarde had predicted was close at hand. An infectious fever broke out in the college, which, in several instances, proved fatal to those who were attacked by it, and spread such terror throughout the college, that when Prince Edwin fell sick, he was forsaken by almost every living creature. His faithful page, Wilfrid, however, watched him day and night, and supplied him with drink and nourish-

ment, which were brought to him by the widow Ermengarde.

For six days the young Atheling was insensible of everything but his own sufferings, and gave no indications of consciousness. On the night of the seventh, as Wilfrid was supporting upon his bosom the head of his afflicted master, and holding a cup of cooling drink to his parched lips, he murmured, "Is it you, my faithful Brithric?"

"No," replied the page, "Brithric is not present, neither hath he entered this chamber, my lord, since the term of your sore sickness commenced."

"Surely, then, he must himself be sick, perhaps dead," said the prince.

"No," replied Wilfrid, with a smile; "he is only fearful of exposing himself to the contagion of the fever."

"Who, then, hath nursed and attended upon me so kindly, during these many days of suffering, while I have lain here unconscious of everything around me?"

"Your servant Wilfrid," replied the page.

"And where then are my chamberlains and attendants, by whom I ought to be surrounded?" asked the prince, raising his languid head from the bosom of Wilfrid, and looking round the spacious but deserted room of state, in which he lay.

"They are all overcome by the terrors of the contagion," said Wilfrid.

"And why did you not flee from it also, Wilfrid?" asked the prince.

"Because, my lord," said Wilfrid, "I knew that you must perish if I abandoned you."

"Ah! Wilfrid," said the prince, bursting into tears, "I deserve not this goodness from you, for

of late I have treated you very unkindly ; I know and feel that I have : can you forgive me ?”

“Think no more of it, my lord, I pray you,” replied Wilfrid, pressing the burning hand of the prince to his lips. “I freely forgive all that has passed, and only wish you to remember it, whenever you feel disposed to yield to the impulses of a defective temper, which, for your own sake, rather than mine, I earnestly hope you will correct.”

Prince Edwin bowed his face on the bosom of his faithful page, and wept long and passionately, promising, at the same time, amendment of his faults, if ever it should please his Heavenly Father to raise him up from the bed of sickness on which he then lay.

How careful should young people be to perform the resolutions of correcting their evil habits, which they make at moments when sickness or adversity brings them to a recollection of their evil propensities. Yet, alas ! how often is it that such promises are forgotten, as soon as they find themselves in a condition to repeat their faults.

Thus it was with Prince Edwin. Instead of seeking the assistance of a higher Power than his own weak will, to strengthen and support him in the right path, he contented himself with saying, “I am determined to begin a fresh course ; to correct my hasty, imperious temper ; to pursue my studies steadily and perseveringly ; and to shun the society of those who, by flattery and false speaking, seek to increase my foolish vanity, and impede my improvement !”

Now it was easy to say all this, but very difficult to put these good resolutions into practice. Prince Edwin, neglecting to implore the Divine aid, to strengthen him in their performance, soon

yielded to temptation, and in a little time, listened to the pernicious flatteries of Brithric with as much pleasure as he had done before the period of his sickness.

It was to no purpose that the faithful Wilfrid remonstrated with him, and pointed out the fatal consequences that result from listening to the false commendations of those who pay no regard to truth. Prince Edwin loved to hear himself praised, even for those very qualities in which he was most deficient. He grew weary of Wilfrid's admonitions, and frequently reproved him, when he ventured to reason with him, or attempted to offer the counsel of a true friend.

Brithric was, as I said before, much older than the prince, or any of the royal wards. He was artful and ambitious, and had formed in his heart a wicked project for his own advancement, which was too likely to plunge the country into the horrors of a civil war. This project was no less than that of attempting to induce Prince Edwin to set himself up for king, and to claim the throne as the eldest legitimate son of the late King Edward.

In all this, Brithric was very ungrateful to King Athelstane, who had been very kind to him, and had recently appointed him to the honourable office of his cup-bearer. That employment, however, was not sufficient to content Brithric, who perceived that King Athelstane was too wise a prince to listen to artful flattery or to allow any person of his court to obtain an undue influence over his mind.

"Ah!" said Brithric to himself, "if Edwin were king, I should be his chief favourite. Wealth and honours would be at my disposal; and, as he believes everything I say to him, I should be able

to govern him, and persuade him to do whatever I wished."

Brithric had soon an opportunity of introducing this treasonable project to Prince Edwin; for King Athelstane sent him with a letter to the head of the college; and as soon as he had delivered it, he paid a visit to Prince Edwin, whom he found in his own chamber, engaged with Wilfrid, in brightening his arrows.

"So, Brithric," said the prince, "do you bring me an invitation to the court of the king, my brother?"

Brithric shook his head, and replied, "No, my prince; King Athelstane has no wish to see you there. Take my word for it, he will never give you an invitation to his court."

"Why not?" asked Prince Edwin, reddening with sudden anger.

"King Athelstane knows that you have a better title to the throne than himself," replied Brithric. "He knows, also, that were his valiant Thanes and Ealdormen to see you, they would be very likely to make you king; for you are possessed of far more princely qualities than the base-born Athelstane."

The eyes of Prince Edwin brightened at the words of Brithric, and he grasped the arrow which he had in his hand with the air of one who holds a sceptre. "Fie, Brithric," said Wilfrid, "how can you be so treacherous to your royal master, as to speak of him with such disrespect, and to put such dangerous and criminal ideas into the mind of Prince Edwin?"

"Peace, meddling brat," cried Edwin, angrily; "who asked counsel of thee in this matter?"

"There are some things which it would be a crime to hear in silence," replied Wilfrid; "and

I implore you, my dear, dear lord, by all the love that once united you and your faithful page in the bonds of friendship, not to listen to the fatal suggestions of the false Brithric."

"False Brithric!" echoed the wily tempter; "I will prove myself the true friend of the Atheling, if he will only give consent to the deed by which I will make him this very day the lord of England."

"Impossible," cried the Prince; "you have no power to raise me to the throne of my father Edward, albeit it is my lawful inheritance."

"The usurper Athelstane knows that full well," observed Brithric. "Therefore it is that you are kept here, like a bird in a cage, leading a life of monkish seclusion in an obscure college, instead of learning to wield the battleaxe, to hurl the spear, and rein the war-horse, like a royal Saxon prince."

"The wily tyrant shall find that Edwin the Atheling is not to be so treated," exclaimed the prince, yielding to a burst of passion.

"You have no remedy, my lord," said Brithric; "for the people love the usurper, and know nothing of his imprisoned brother, Edwin, the rightful king of England."

"And shall I always be immured, like a captive thrush?" asked Edwin, indignantly.

"Yes, while Athelstane lives, you must expect no other fate," said Brithric. "But what if Athelstane should die?" continued he, fixing his eyes on the face of the prince.

"Oh! hear him not, my lord," cried Wilfrid, flinging himself at the Atheling's feet; "he would tempt you to a crime as deadly as that of Cain."

"Peace, son of Cendric the traitor!" exclaimed

Prince Edwin, levelling at the same time a blow at his faithful page, which felled him to the earth, where he lay covered with blood, and apparently without sense or motion.

"And now speak on, my loving Brithric," continued the Atheling, without paying the slightest regard to the condition of poor Wilfrid, who was, however, perfectly aware of all that was passing, though, to all appearance, insensible.

"My lord," said Brithric, drawing nearer to the Atheling, "I will now speak plainly. I am the cup-bearer of King Athelstane, and the next time I present the red wine to him at the banquet, it shall be drugged with such a draught as shall make Prince Edwin lord of England within an hour after the usurper has swallowed it."

"Traitor, begone!" exclaimed the prince, filled with horror at this dreadful proposal. "I would not stain my soul with the crime of murder, if by such means I could obtain the empire of the world."

Brithric used many wicked arguments to induce Prince Edwin to consent to the murder of his royal brother; but Edwin commanded him to leave his presence, and never to presume to enter it again. The vile wretch, however, alarmed lest the prince should inform the king of the crime he had meditated against him, went to his royal master, and accused the Atheling of having endeavoured to persuade him to mix poison in the wine-cup of his sovereign.

Athelstane, justly indignant at the crime laid to the charge of his royal brother, came, with a party of guards, to the college. Here, before his preceptors and all the royal wards, his companions, he charged Edwin with having meditated the crimes of treason and fratricide.

You may imagine the consternation of the prince on hearing this dreadful accusation. It was to no purpose that he protested his innocence, and called on all his faithful associates to witness for him, that he had never uttered an injurious thought against the king. Those who had been most ready to flatter him were silent on this occasion, for they perceived that King Athelstane was persuaded of his brother's guilt; and some of them said, "They remembered that Prince Edwin had often said that he had a better title to the throne than King Athelstane."

Prince Edwin could not deny that he had used these words; but it seemed to him very hard, that they should be repeated to the king in the hour of his sore distress. Looking around, with a countenance expressive of mingled sorrow and indignation, he said,—

"Unhappy that I am! they that were my most familiar friends are they that speak against me! Is there no one that can bear me witness that I am guiltless of the crime of plotting to take away my brother's life?"

"I will, though I die for it!" cried a voice, feeble from bodily suffering, but firm in the courageous utterance of truth. It was that of Wilfrid, the page, who, with his countenance still pale and disfigured from the effects of the blow received from Prince Edwin, stood boldly forward, to bear witness of the scene which had taken place, in his presence, between Brithric and the prince.

"Oh, Wilfrid, generous Wilfrid," cried Edwin, bursting into tears, "how nobly do you fulfil the precepts of your heavenly Master, by returning good for evil!"

Now Athelstane had been so deeply prejudiced against his unfortunate brother, by the wicked

Brithric, that he would not listen to Wilfrid's honest evidence. When, therefore, he heard that he was the son of the traitor Cendric, who had been so deeply implicated in Alfred's plot, he was so unjust as to believe all that Brithric said against him. Accordingly, he took Wilfrid, as well as the young Atheling, and carried them prisoners to London. He there put them on board a ship that was lying in the river Thames, and when night came, set sail with them, and went out to sea.

CHAPTER IV.

PRINCE EDWIN AND WILFRID ARE SET ADRIFT IN A BOAT.—A STORM.—PRINCE EDWIN FALLS OVERBOARD, AND IS DROWNED.—WILFRID IS DRIVEN ASHORE IN FRANCE.—DISCOVERED BY THE QUEEN OGINA.—RETURNS TO ENGLAND.—ESTABLISHES THE INNOCENCE OF EDWIN.—IS RESTORED TO HIS LANDS, AND ENJOYS HONOURS AND CONFIDENCE FROM THE KING.—CONCLUSION.

PRINCE EDWIN was not greatly alarmed, for he thought the king, his brother, was only going to banish him to some foreign country, where he fondly thought that Wilfrid and himself might live together very happily. But when they were out of sight of land, and the moon had risen over a wild waste of stormy billows, the king had both the prisoners brought upon deck, and he then ordered the captain to put them into a small boat, and set them adrift, at the mercy of the winds and waves.

It was to no purpose that the wretched Edwin threw himself at his brother's feet, and entreated for mercy. Athelstane only replied, "You tried to persuade my faithful cup-bearer to take my

life—your own life, therefore, is forfeited ; but, as you are the son of my royal father, I will not shed your blood upon the scaffold. I commit you and your guilty companion, the son of the traitor Cendric, to the mercy of God, who can and will preserve the innocent, if it be his good pleasure so to do.”

“And to His mercy, not thine, O king! do I, in the full confidence of innocence, commend both myself and my unfortunate master,” said Wilfrid, as the seamen hurried him, with the weeping Atheling, over the side of the vessel, into the little boat, that lay tossing and rocking among the tempestuous billows.

When the unhappy youths found themselves alone, without sails or rudder, on the pathless ocean, they sank into each other's arms, and wept long and passionately.

At length, Wilfrid lifted up his voice and heart in fervent prayer to that Almighty and merciful God, who had delivered Daniel from the lion's den, and preserved his faithful servants, Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego, unharmed in the fiery furnace. Prince Edwin, on the contrary, gave himself up to despair, and when he saw the king's ship spreading her canvass to the gale, and fast receding from his sight, he uttered a cry that was heard above the uproar of the winds and waves. Starting up in the boat, and extending his arms towards the disappearing vessel, he unwittingly 'lost his balance, and was in a moment ingulfed in the stormy billows.

We may imagine the anguish and terror of Wilfrid, on witnessing the sad fate of his young lord, which he had no power to prevent. Thoughts of his widowed mother's grief for himself, too, came over his mind, and filled his eyes with tears.

for her, as well as for his ill-fated lord. For himself, however, he felt no fears even in this dreadful hour, when left, companionless, on the tempestuous ocean, for his trust was firm and steadfast in the mercies of his Heavenly Father.

That night the winds roared, and the waves raged mightily. Many a gallant bark foundered in the storm, and many a skilful seaman found a watery grave, before the morning dawned in the cloudy horizon. But the frail vessel into which the unfortunate Atheling and his page had been thrust, weathered the gale, and, with her lonely tenant, Wilfrid, was driven ashore, at a place called Whitesande, on the coast of Picardy, in France.

When Wilfrid landed, he was drenched through and through. He was hungry, too, and sorrowful, and weary. He knew not where he was, but he failed not to return thanks to that gracious God who had preserved him from the perils of the raging seas, to which he had been so awfully exposed, and whose merciful providence, he doubted not, would guide and sustain him in the strange land whither he had been conducted.

Thus meekly, thus nobly, did the young page support himself under this fresh trial. But when the remembrance of the unfortunate Atheling, his royal master, came over him, his heart melted within him; he bowed his face on his knees, as he sat all lonely on the sea-beach, and he wept aloud, exclaiming—

“Oh, Edwin! royal Edwin! hadst thou patiently trusted in the mercy of God, thou mightest, notwithstanding thy late adversity, have lived to wear the crown of thy father Edward.” Overpowered by his emotions, he again sank upon the ground.

"Is it of Edwin of England that thou speakest, young Saxon?" asked a soft voice in the sweet familiar language of his own native land.

He raised his head, and found that he was surrounded by a party of ladies, one of whom questioned him with an air of eager interest, respecting the expressions he had used touching the unfortunate Prince Edwin.

Now this lady was no other than Ogina, Queen of France, the sister of Prince Edwin. Being on a visit at the house of a great lord, on the coast of Picardy, she had come down to the beach that morning, with her ladies of honour, to bathe: a custom among ladies, even of the highest rank, in those days. Hearing that a Saxon bark had been driven on shore by the storm, and seeing the disconsolate figure of Wilfrid on the beach, she had drawn near, and, unperceived by the suffering youth, had overheard his melancholy soliloquy.

While Wilfrid related the sad story of his master's untimely fate, the royal lady wept aloud. After he had concluded his melancholy tale, she took him to the castle of which she was herself an inmate, and commended him to the care of her noble host, who quickly attended to all his wants, and furnished him with dry garments.

When Wilfrid had taken due rest and refreshment, the queen requested that he should be brought into her presence. He was, accordingly, ushered into a stately apartment, where Ogina was seated under a crimson canopy, fringed with gold. She bade him draw near, and extended her hand towards him. Being well acquainted with courtly customs, the youth respectfully bowed his knee, and humbly kissed the hand of the royal lady.

"thou hast been found true, when the only reward thou didst expect for thy faithfulness was a cruel death. But surely thou hast been conducted by a kind Providence into the presence of one who has both the will and the power to requite thee for thy fidelity to the unfortunate Atheling; for I am his sister, the queen of France."

"And I have, then, the honour to stand before the royal Ogina, daughter of my late lord, King Edward, and Queen of King Charles of France?" said Wilfrid, again bowing himself.

"The same," replied the queen, taking a ring of great value from her finger, and placing it on that of the page.

"Take this ring," continued she, "in token of my favour; and if thou wilt serve me in one thing, I will make thee the greatest lord in my husband's court."

"Royal lady," said Wilfrid, "I have a widowed mother in my own land, whom I cannot forsake; neither would I desert my native country to become a peer of France. But tell me wherein I can be of service to thee, and if it be in my power, it shall be done."

"Darest thou," said the queen, "return to England, and presenting thyself before my brother Athelstane, thy King, declare to him the innocence, and the sad fate, of Edwin the Atheling, his father's son?"

"Lady, I not only dare, but I desire so to do," replied Wilfrid; "for I fear my God, and I have no other fear."

Then the Queen of France loaded Wilfrid with rich presents, and sent him over to England in a gallant ship, to bear the mournful tidings of poor Prince Edwin's death to England's king. She thought that when Athelstane should hear the sad

tale, told in the pathetic language of the faithful page, his heart would be touched with remorse for what he had done.

Now King Athelstane was already conscience-stricken for his conduct towards his brother Edwin. His ship, during the same night that he had compelled him to enter the boat with Wilfrid, was terribly tossed by the tempest, and he felt that the vengeance of God was upon him for his hardness of heart. The crew of the royal vessel had toiled and laboured all night, and it was with great difficulty that the ship was, at length, got into port. Every individual on board, as well as the king himself, felt convinced that the storm was a visitation upon them for what they had done.

King Athelstane had become very melancholy, and offered large rewards to any one who would bring him news of his unfortunate brother; and he looked with horror upon Brithric, as the cause of his having dealt so hardly with Edwin. One day, when Brithric was waiting at table with the king's cup, it happened that his foot slipped, and he would have fallen if he had not dexterously saved himself with the other foot: observing some of the courtiers smile, he cried out jestingly, "See you, my lords, how one brother helps the other."

"It is thus that brother *should* aid brother," said the king; "but it was thee, false traitor, that did set me against mine! for the which thou shalt surely pay the forfeit of thy life in the same hour that tidings are brought me of his death."

At that moment Wilfrid, presenting himself before the king, said, "King Athelstane, I bring thee tidings of Edwin the Atheling!"

"The fairest earldom in my kingdom shall be

the reward of him who will tell me that my brother liveth," exclaimed the king eagerly.

"If thou wouldst give the royal crown of England from off thine head, it would not bribe the deep sea to give up its dead!" replied the page.

"Who art thou that speakest such woful words?" demanded Athelstane, fixing his eyes with a doubting and fearful scrutiny on the face of the page.

"Hast thou forgotten Wilfrid, the son of Cendric?" replied the youth: "he who commended himself to the mercy of the King of kings, in that dark hour when thy brother Edwin implored for thine in vain."

"Ha!" cried the king, "I remember thee now; thou art the pale stripling who bore witness of my brother's innocence of the crime with which the false-tongued Brithric charged him!"

"The same, my lord," said Wilfrid; "and God hath witnessed for my truth, by preserving me from the waters of the great deep, to which thou didst commit me with my lord, Prince Edwin."

"But Edwin—my brother Edwin! tell me of him!" cried Athelstane, grasping the shoulder of the page.

"Did not his drowning cry reach thine ear, royal Athelstane?" asked Wilfrid, bursting into tears. "Ere thy tall vessel had disappeared from our sight, the fair-haired Atheling was engulfed in the stormy billows that swelled round our frail bark, and I, only I, am, by the especial mercy of God, preserved to tell thee the sad fate of thy father's son, whom thou wert, in an evil hour, moved by a treacherous villain to destroy."

"Traitor," said the king, turning to Brithric, "thy false tongue hath not only slain my brother

but thyself! Thou shalt die for having wickedly induced me to become his murderer!"

"And thou wilt live, O king, to suffer the pangs of an upbraiding conscience," replied the culprit. "Where was thy wisdom, where thy discrimination, where thy sense of justice, when thou lent so ready an ear to my false and improbable accusations against thy boyish brother? I sought my own aggrandizement—and to have achieved that, I would have destroyed thee, and placed him upon the throne. I made him my tool—you became my dupe—and I now myself fall a victim to my own machinations."

The guards then removed Brithric from the royal presence, and the next day he met with his deserts, in a public execution.

As for the faithful Wilfrid, King Athelstane not only caused the lands and titles of which his father, Cendric, had been deprived, to be restored to him, but also conferred upon him great honours and rewards. He lived to be the pride and comfort of his widowed mother, Ermengarde, and ever afterwards enjoyed the full confidence of the king.

The royal Athelstane never ceased to lament the death of his unfortunate brother, Edwin. He gained many great victories, and reigned long and gloriously over England, but he was evermore tormented by remorse of conscience for his conduct towards his youthful brother, Prince Edwin.

THE WOLF TRIBUTE.

A TALE FROM OLD ENGLISH CHRONICLES.

CHAPTER I.

KING EDGAR AT CHESTER.—HIS BARGE ROWED ON THE DEE BY EIGHT VASSAL KINGS.—HE IS PETITIONED BY THE PEOPLE TO ADOPT MEASURES AGAINST THE RAVAGES OF THE WOLVES.—ORDAINS A GREAT HUNTING FESTIVAL.—DISCONTENT OF THE KING OF SCOTLAND.—EDGAR ASSERTS HIS SUPERIORITY.

IN the year 961, when King Edgar, surnamed the Peaceable, kept court in the fourth year of his reign, at his royal city of Chester, the King of Scotland, and seven inferior monarchs, came there to do him homage, and to swear fealty to him as their liege lord.

On the following day, as chronicles relate, King Edgar entered a gaily decorated barge that had been prepared for the occasion, in which these eight tributary monarchs rowed him down the river Dee to the neighbouring monastery of St. John, he himself steering the vessel. This must, indeed, have been a noble sight to all who witnessed it; for each of the kings who that day plied the oars, wore a regal diadem and golden bracelets. Our mighty King Edgar, who stood at the helm, was the most powerful monarch that had, at that time, ever swayed the English sceptre; he was attired in his robes of state, and wore the

THE WOLF TRIBUTE.



Edwy saved by Selred.



King Edgar with the head of the Were-Wolf.

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royal crown of the *Bretwalda*, or sovereign ruler of the British Isles, from sea to sea.

When the illustrious steersman and his kingly rowers came to the stately church of St. John, they landed, and attended divine service. They afterwards sailed back to the palace, where King Edgar entertained them and his nobles with a sumptuous banquet, and invited the whole party to stay with him to hunt the deer, the wild-boar, and the wolf, on the English banks of the Dee.

Some of my juvenile readers, who are as yet unacquainted with the history of their own country, will be, perhaps, surprised to learn that King Edgar should invite his royal guests to hunt wolves in the country round Chester; for there are now no wolves running wild in England. But in the era of which I speak, England was very thinly peopled, and abounded in vast tracts of wild forest land, covered with thick underwood, which afforded shelter for beasts of prey of various kinds; and the mountainous counties, especially on the borders of Wales, were infested with wild animals.

The wolves were of a very fierce and ravenous breed. Often, when pressed with hunger, they descended into the plains and pastoral valleys, where the shepherds kept their flocks, and committed terrible devastations among them.

The inhabitants of the border counties, whose dwellings were scattered far a-field, made piteous complaints to King Edgar, of the injury which their flocks and herds, and sometimes their children, sustained from the frequent attacks of these ferocious creatures. The king, accustomed to abide only in populous cities, scarcely knew how to credit the assertion of his Cheshire and Shropshire lieges, respecting the loss and terror which

they suffered from the nightly, and sometimes daily, appearance of the wolves among them. While he was at Chester, however, petitions from the neighbouring franklins, farmers, and ceorls, were perpetually delivered to him, praying his assistance in reducing the numbers of these formidable creatures, whom they represented as ready to devour the whole county of Chester.

"Surely there must be some exaggeration in these statements," said the king, one day, to his chancellor, Dunstan; "I am weary of the very name of a wolf—I hear so much about them now-a-days. For my own part, I am never able to see a wolf without taking great pains to hunt for it with my keenest wolf-hounds, in my good forests of Waltham and Windsor."

"Waltham and Windsor are too near the great city of London to abound much in savage beasts," replied Dunstan. "Moreover, your Majesty's royal predecessors, with their knights and nobles, have resorted so often to those forests, in quest of sylvan game—making their inmost coverts resound with the huntsman's shout, the cry of deep-mouthed dogs, and the blast of bugle-horns—that the felon-wolf hath retreated before their clamours to more solitary haunts. I doubt me not but your Majesty shall find enow of the breed on these borderlands, that lie so near to the Welsh mountains."

"Then," said King Edgar, "while I tarry at Chester I will proclaim a grand hunting-match, which, if wolves be as plentiful as my Cheshire lieges would have me suppose, will afford some amusement for my vassal kings, and good sport for myself withal. By my royal truth," continued he, laughing, and laying his hand on the briefs, or petitions for assistance against the wolves with which his table was covered, "I

believe that the good folks would try to persuade me that they are troubled with a legion of wolves, each as guileful and as ravenous as the wolf in the legend of Little Red Riding Hood. I marvel much that they do not put that veracious tale into one of their briefs, to show cause why I should open a campaign in person against these rapacious beasts."

Dunstan shook his head, and gravely reproved his youthful sovereign for his levity in mentioning a foolish little tale, when listening to the sufferings of a portion of his subjects, which it was his duty to search into and endeavour to remedy.

On this King Edgar put on a more serious countenance, and promised to traverse the whole of his dominions on the northern side of the Dee, to examine into the condition of the farmers and peasants. If he found they were so much infested by the wolves as they had represented to him, he declared "he would devise such a remedy as would clear the whole country of these formidable creatures."

The county of Chester was the most fertile and abundant in rich pasturage of any part of England, especially that portion of it watered by the river Dee, and called by King Edward the First, the "Vale Royal of England."

Our Saxon ancestors were well aware of the superior fertility of the vale of the Dee. In the days of the peaceful Edgar, many a pleasant homestead of lordly thane or gentle franklin arose along its verdant banks, unawed by the terror of the Welsh princes, who, having become the vassals of this mighty sovereign, had engaged to pay to him an annual tribute in gold, silver, and cattle, as the price of his friendship and protection.

Wales was then divided into three principalities, and the names of the princes who ruled over them were Dynwall, Siferth, and Howell. These came to Edgar's court at Chester, with Kenneth, King of Scots; Malcolm, King of Cumbria; Mac-cus the Dane, King of Mona and the Southern Isles; Inchell, King of Galloway; and Jervaf, King of Westmore; making altogether, the eight kings who performed vassals' service to him, as their Bretwalda, or sovereign, by rowing him in his barge up the Dee; thinking it, no doubt, better to do that, than to have their dominions invaded by the armies of so powerful a monarch.

Some people would say, that it was not very courteous of Edgar to exact so servile an act of homage from persons of such exalted rank; but he did so, in the spirit of a conqueror of those days, to advance the glory of England. After it was over, he treated his royal vassals with much hospitality, and invited them to this great wolf-hunt, of which I told you just now.

Edgar, and the eight tributary kings, his vassals, set off from the good city of Chester by peep of dawn, one Monday morning, attended by a goodly train of nobles, knights, and gentlemen, gallantly mounted.

They were all dressed alike, in tunics of hunter's green. Each wore a gold embroidered belt across his shoulder, which supported an ornamented quiver, full of arrows for the sport, and had a silver bugle suspended in front, to summon the rest of the company in the event of being separated, or in distress or danger. A tough yew bow, newly-strung, that it might ring sharp and true, when aim should be taken at the felon-wolf, completed the equipment of the royal hunters.

They were attended by a hundred stout yeomen, pricklers of the game, and a pack of keen wolf-hounds. The whole country rang with the merry shouts of the huntsmen, the cry of the dogs, and the cheering blasts of the bugle-horns, when they set forth from Chester. The Welsh mountains echoed back the jovial clamours of the princely train and their gallant followers.

The tributary monarchs were all in high good-humour, except Kenneth of Scots, who was displeased when he observed that King Edgar wore his regal circlet as Bretwalda, round his green velvet hunting-cap, thereby denoting his superior rank to all the royal personages in presence.

So Kenneth, turning with a scornful smile to his friend and cousin, Maccus the Dane, King of Mona and the Southern Isles, said, "If Edgar of England's stature were as lofty as his pride, he would be the tallest prince in Christendom, instead of the most diminutive."

Then Maccus the Dane laughed heartily; for he and Kenneth were persons of gigantic height and athletic forms, and had arrived at the full strength and power of manhood. Edgar was but a slender stripling, considerably below the middle height; yet he was so perfect in all manly exercises, that he made up in skill and activity, that which he lacked in bodily force. He possessed, too, such a quick and ready wit, that he never was at a loss for an answer to any one; and, having overheard the King of Scotland's jest, which was not, by-the-by, wholly unintended to reach his ear, he replied to it in these words:

"Kenneth, son of Alpine, didst thou never hear that the man who steereth the vessel requireth

not so strong an arm as he who pulleth at the oar?"

Then all the English knights and nobles laughed aloud at the smart rejoinder which their lord had made to the Scottish king's taunt respecting his small stature. Kenneth blushed at the pointed allusion to the servile act of homage which he had, on the preceding day, assisted in performing for the youthful Bretwalda.

Maccus the Dane shared in his confusion; and not one of the tributary kings had a word to say, though at first they had all enjoyed the King of Scotland's joke.

It may, perhaps, appear singular to such of my young readers as are acquainted with the outlines of Scottish history, that a king of such a free and warlike nation as Scotland, should condescend to offer so humiliating an act of homage to the English sovereign. But King Kenneth had a very particular favour to gain of Edgar, who had been chosen by him, and Malcolm, King of Cumbria, to decide an ancient quarrel between the Kings of Scotland and Cumberland, respecting the county of Lothian, which was claimed by both parties. Edgar adjudged it to the King of Scotland, on condition of his doing homage for it, as originally belonging to the English dominions; and Kenneth was glad to have so important a point secured to him at the expense of a slight sacrifice of pride.

From that day the English sovereign always styled the King of Scotland his vassal; and William, King of Scots, surnamed the Lion, admitted this claim, by assisting personally at the coronation of Richard the First, generally called Richard Cœur de Lion. From this act of submission, too, on the part of Kenneth, did Edward the First of

England found his claim, in the contest between Bruce and Baliol, to act as umpire between them, as lord paramount of Scotland.

I have dwelt the longer on these particulars, because it is my purpose to convey all the historical knowledge I can in these Tales, and this is a circumstance of great importance to be remembered. The abridged histories, which are written for the use of very young readers, do not mention it.

I will now proceed to the story I have promised to relate, about the Wolf Tribute.

CHAPTER II.

SUCCESS OF THE HUNT.—THE WERE-WOLF.—KING EDGAR PROPOSES TO HUNT WITHOUT THE DOGS.—RICH PRIZE DECREED FOR HIM WHO SHOULD KILL THE WERE-WOLF.—THE KING LOST IN THE CHASE.—A SAXON HOMESTEAD.—RANK AND SOCIETY IN THE OLDEN TIMES.—REDWALD, A SAXON FRANKLIN, AND HIS CHILDREN.—PERIL OF EDWY.

KING EDGAR and his princely train killed more wolves on the first day of the royal hunt, than he had imagined were to be found in the whole of his dominions.

On the second day they went deeper into the woods and forests, and killed a great many more ; so that he began to think his Cheshire, Shropshire, and Staffordshire lieges had not complained without reason of their numbers. These wolves, too, were of so ferocious a breed, that they fought with the fiercest hounds that were used in the pursuit ; and they killed, or lamed so many of them, that on the third day the pack was much diminished.

Those wolves that had tasted human flesh were called were-wolves by the Saxons, who held them in peculiar dread on account of their having acquired additional ferocity from this circumstance.

On the morning of the fourth day, though the king and his company were not tired of the sport of hunting wolves, it appeared plainly that the dogs were, for when the master of the king's wolf-hounds ordered them out, they all howled most piteously, and refused to come forth from their kennels. The whip of the huntsman enforced obedience, but they limped, hung their ears, whined, and made so pitiful an appearance, that the King Edgar, turning to his royal guests and noble attendants, said,—

“The dogs are good dogs, and have hunted bravely for three days, but now, albeit, they hang chase. They are no cravens, but rather to be commended for their sagacity, since they are aware that the fierce wolves would get the better of them to-day.”

“Shall we then be defrauded of our sport to-day, to spare thy hounds withal, Bretwalda?” growled Maccus the Dane, to whose savage nature a wolf-hunt was the choicest of all pleasures.

“Nay, Maccus, I said not so,” returned King Edgar, with a smile. “You, and all this princely company, are free to hunt the wolf to-day, if it so please ye; and I am ready to mount my good steed, Anlaf, and wend with ye to the field or forest, whichever ye list; but my brave dogs have done their duty well in the fierce chase, on three successive days, and shall be urged no more.”

“Does, then, King Edgar propose our setting forth on a wolf-chase without dogs?” exclaimed the Scottish king.

"Why not, Kenneth of Scotland?" replied King Edgar: "since the more daring be the venture, the nobler shall the triumph be of him who slayeth a were-wolf, single-handed, with his hunting spear or bow."

"There be some of my Cheshire and Shropshire subjects who complain that a monstrous were-wolf infesteth these parts, who hath not only worried their flocks, but, entering their unguarded homesteads, hath sometimes devoured their infant children," said King Edgar. "What say ye, noble princes?" continued he; "shall we go forth in quest of the monster?"

"With all my heart," said the King of Scots.

"But what shall be his guerdon who slays the were-wolf?" asked Maccus the Dane.

"The glory of the deed," replied King Edgar. "But if that be not enough," pursued he, taking the regal bracelet from his arm, and casting it upon the ground, "let every crowned and anointed sovereign in presence follow my example, and lay his bracelet by the side of mine; and let him who bringeth the were-wolf's head into my good city of Chester, be the winner of them all to make a golden drinking-horn of the metal, and a chain for his neck of the jewels wherewith they are enriched."

"Agreed," exclaimed the tributary kings, and each flung down his bracelet beside that of the Bretwalda, who consigned them to the keeping of his chancellor, Dunstan.

The eight kings, with their Bretwalda, rode on, in company, through many a field and tangled copse, without encountering a single wolf—for the clamour of the three days' hunt had so scared these subtle creatures, that they laid close in their caves and coverts. At length, Howell, one of the

Welsh sovereigns, proposed that they should ride separately, and, as they had no dogs, beat the bushes with their hunting-spears, to rouse the game.

So earnestly did they engage in this business, that several of them unwittingly parted company from the others. Among the rest, King Edgar, in his keen pursuit of the sport, became entirely separated from his royal guests and attendants, and, losing his way, wandered for some hours in a thick forest, on the borders of Shropshire, till, at last, despairing of recovering the lost track, he threw the reins on his horse's neck, leaving him to choose his own path. The sagacious animal soon brought him out of the forest recesses, into a wild but open country, near a spot where the two counties of Cheshire and Shropshire were parted by a winding rivulet, that rushed along with some rapidity from the hills above, over rough and broken ground, and carried its rippling tribute to the Dee, which there divides England from the principality of Wales.

King Edgar paused to survey the features of the country, and perceived a ring-fence before him, which enclosed several hides of land, apparently in rich cultivation. On one side lay a fallow field, in preparation for the autumn sowing; close by, the barley was whitening for harvest. The first golden wheatsheaf of the year reared its plummy head on a stubble furrow, from whence it had been shorn that morning, while the tall ears of ripened corn, as yet uncut, waved heavily around, as if inviting the sickle of the loitering husbandman to gather its abundant treasures; but the fields were deserted, for it was about the hour of eleven, and the labourers were all at dinner. Green slopes of pasture flanked the arable land on either side,

and above a flower-crowned hillock in the background, rose a thin column of blue smoke, from the homestead of the rural patriarch of these fields, which was both sheltered from wintry winds, and concealed from observation by the rising ground above.

From the quantity of land which was enclosed between the ring-fence, and the little brook not exceeding ten hides of land, King Edgar knew that the owner of the farm was a franklin, or free Saxon gentleman, not a thane, or nobleman;—for a thane must be possessed of forty hides of land, and a hide was about a hundred acres.

The thanes waited upon the king in the palace, attended him to the wars, and assisted him in making laws for the better government of his people. They filled the place of our present peers, many of whom are their descendants; for William the Conqueror changed the title of thane into that of baron, or lord, and invested them with many new privileges, which may be considered the origin of our House of Lords.

The franklins were the gentry of the land. They had the power of selling their lands, if they pleased, and, being freeholders, had no one's leave to ask about it, nor even to obtain the king's consent. They had a right to appear in the *Wittenagemot*, or great national council, and give their votes and make speeches on any measure that was there proposed; but, generally speaking, the franklins, like our present country gentlemen, troubled themselves very little about public affairs, but remained quietly at home, and employed themselves in the cultivation of their estates.

There was another class of men, called *Ceorls*, or farmers, who cultivated the lands, that were let to them by the lords, or thanes, on long leases,

at very low rents. They had no power to sell or transfer these lands, nor to make any important alteration, such as removing a building, or cutting down a tree, without having first obtained leave so to do, which was seldom granted without the payment of a sum of money, called a fine. This was the origin of copyhold in England; and from the name of *ceorl* comes the term, *carl*, or *churl*, which is sometimes applied contemptuously to ill-mannered persons, but it originally only meant a farmer, or husbandman.

The persons who tilled the land were called *villeins*, or villagers, and sometimes, *serfs*. They were, in most cases, wholly subjected to the will of the lords on whose estates they were born; but they were not so badly off as the *thralls*, or bondsmen, who were slaves, and could be bought or sold at pleasure, like the beasts of the field.

Such was the state of society in England in the "*good old times*," as discontented people call those days. We certainly have much better laws and customs in our own days; for no man, be he ever so great, has any power over the person or property of another; and the poorest peasant is a free man, and can buy or sell anything he has, without asking any one's leave. Every sincere lover of his country ought to see that it is his duty to assist in preserving the present order of things, which is so admirably suited for the happiness and well-being of all ranks of people.

I will proceed to tell you something of the inhabitants of the Saxon homestead, or dwelling-house, the curling smoke of which King Edgar observed ascending over the hill into the clear air, while he was gazing round him at the prospect of the harvest. But it will be necessary to leave his majesty there to amuse himself, while I

relate particulars of the humbler personages connected with this tale.

Redwald, the wealthy Saxon franklin, who lived in this homestead, and owned the most fertile portion of the lands of Overton, had two children only; a daughter of nine years old, named Edith, and a baby boy, the darling of his heart, who was called Edwy.

The franklin's wife had died soon after the birth of her little son. Edith, who had been sadly spoiled before, on account of having been for some years the only child of her parents, was thus wholly left to the care of her nurse, a silly, ignorant woman, who indulged her very improperly, and taught her to despise the children of the neighbouring ceorls and serfs, because she was a franklin's daughter. Edith, of course, became petulant, proud, and self-willed. She minded nothing that her father said to her, yet she expected the servants and thralls to pay implicit obedience to all her orders, and insisted on every one calling her the Lady Edith, though she had not the slightest claim to that lofty title, as she was not the daughter of a thane.

She refused to learn to spin, to knit, or to embroider, like the daughters of other Saxon gentlemen, or even to sew. She passed her time in the fields, looking for birds'-nests, or flinging stones into the brook, or quarrelling with an orphan boy, named Selred, who was the nephew of a Cheshire ceorl, whose flocks and herds he kept on the opposite side of the stream.

Edith was not contented with playing the truant herself; for if she possibly could steal him away from his nurse, she would convey her little brother, Edwy, into the fields with her, feeding him with pig-nuts and berries, to keep him quiet.

Her father had strictly forbidden her to take this precious infant beyond the enclosure, or courtyard, in front of the homestead, lest any evil should befall him; but Edith was a disobedient child. Though she really loved her brother Edwy, she thought nothing of endangering his health, by setting him down on the wet grass, when she was tired of carrying him, or leading him through tangled brakes, where his clothes were torn, and his hands and face scratched with the brambles.

Once, when she took it into her head to wade into the brook, in quest of river-muscles, she carelessly left little Edwy playing among the wild flowers on the steep bank: and he, suddenly missing her, crept to the very edge to look for her, crying "Gith! Gith!" which was his way of calling Edith. He would have fallen into the water and probably been drowned, if Selred, who perceived his danger, had not luckily caught him by the clothes, just as he was on the point of rolling down the bank.

Edith had paddled far down the stream, gathering river-muscles and stones from its pebbly bed, and now and then snatching the pink blossoms from the flowering rushes and willow-herbs along the banks, quite forgetful of her poor little brother, till she heard his screams.

She was then in a terrible fright; and dropping all her aquatic treasures, began to hasten to the spot where she had left him. "Oh, my sweet brother! are you then safe?" she exclaimed, bursting into tears, when she saw him in the arms of Selred, laughing and clapping his hands to hail her approach.

"Yes, he is safe; but no thanks to the care you have taken of him," said Selred. "I counsel thee to go home and dry thy kirtle; it is draggled

nearly to the girdle in the brook, and much defiled with mud, which livery doth ill beseem a maiden who affecteth to be called my Lady Edith."

"Give me my little brother, and begone, thou evil-spoken clown!" said Edith, angrily.

"No," replied Selred, "I shall carry the fair child home to his father, and warn him not to trust him in such keeping again."

Then Edith, who knew that she had disobeyed her father's command, in taking her brother out of sight of the homestead, was very much troubled; for she felt assured that her father would punish her for what she had done. Instead, however, of entreating Selred's forbearance, and promising amendment for the time to come, she threw herself upon the young ceorl, and endeavoured to tear her brother from his arms by force.

"Have a care, damsel," said Selred, "or you will harm the tender babe with your violence."

But Edith, without paying any heed to this warning, continued to pull Edwy till she sorely pinched his fat little arms, and made him cry piteously. Then she grew quite furious, and forgot herself so far as to pommel the young ceorl with her double fists; and, finding that made no impression on him, began to pull his hair, and actually tore out a whole handful of his shining ringlets by the roots.

"Fie, damsel," cried Selred, "call you these the manners of a lady, or one who would fain be called so? By my fay, you remind me more of a wild cat, that hath just descended from the Welsh mountains, rather than aught beside."

"Why don't you give me my little brother, then, vile ceorl?" cried the young virago, shaking Selred by the arm

“Because you are not fit to be intrusted with so tender a babe, you naughty maiden,” replied Selred. “I wonder the were-wolf, that sometimes prowleth in these pastures, hath not come and devoured him before now, while you have wandered away, leaving the fair child all lonely, and oft-times weeping, on the wet grass. However, you shall do so no more, if I can prevent it; and here, in good time, cometh the worthy franklin, your father.”

CHAPTER III.

EDITH FALSELY ACCUSES SELRED.—THE CONSEQUENCES TO SELRED AND HERSELF.—CHESTER IN THE OLDEN TIME.—RAVAGES OF THE WERE-WOLF FROM THE WELSH MOUNTAINS.

A WICKED thought came into Edith's head, when she saw her father approaching. Without pausing for a moment to consider what a dreadful crime she was going to commit, she ran to him, and showing him her wet garments, told him, “that Selred had taken Edwy from her by force, and when she endeavoured to rescue him, had pushed her into the brook.”

Now Redwald was of a very hasty temper, and possessed but little judgment, or he would easily have detected the falsehood of Edith's tale. But he never suspected that his young daughter was capable of such wickedness as deliberately breaking one of the commandments of God, by bearing false witness against her neighbour—and that neighbour an unfortunate orphan, who was unkindly treated by a hard-hearted uncle. So he came up to Selred with a stern countenance, and

asked him "how he had dared to touch his little son?" then, without waiting for reply or explanation, snatched Edwy from his arms and gave him into Edith's care, while he inflicted a severe beating upon poor Selred with his quarter-staff:

Selred was very indignant at this unjust punishment; he scorned to weep; neither did he offer revilings in return for this cruel treatment. He merely shook his head reproachfully at Edith, and said—

"Ah, naughty maiden, this is thy doing; thou hast spoken falsely of me to the franklin, thy father, or he would never requite the service I have rendered thy brother by using me thus."

A burning blush overspread the face of the guilty maiden. She hung her head, and was on the point of confessing her fault with tears; but a feeling of false shame withheld her from making the proper acknowledgment. She thought her father would be much shocked at what she had done; so, rather than he should think ill of her, she permitted him to send a formal complaint of Selred's conduct to his cruel uncle, Butred.

The next time Edith saw Selred she was ashamed to look him in the face; but, stealing a sidelong glance at him, she was shocked to see that his rosy bloom had faded to a death-like paleness, and that he wore a heavy iron collar about his neck.

Returning home, she inquired of her nurse, "Why does Selred wear that ugly iron collar about his neck?"

"Because," replied the nurse, "when his uncle Butred, the ceorl, chastised him for pushing you into the brook, he tried to run away; on which his uncle hath treated him like a slave, by putting the collar of a born thrall about his neck.

Moreover, Switha, the dairy-maid, saith that he hath been fed on naught but bread and water ever since the day that the franklin, our master, made complaint of his ill-natured behaviour to our darling Edwy and yourself, my Lady Edith."

Edith covered her face with her hands and burst into tears, nor could all her nurse's flattering speeches and caresses pacify her; for the thought of poor Selred's sufferings, which had all been caused by her false tongue, rendered her quite wretched. Still she could not bring herself to acknowledge the crime of which she had been guilty; and her mind being ill at ease, she became melancholy and irritable.

Her father spent all his time in the fields, and seldom came into the house except at meal-times. He was then so much occupied in carving for his serving-men, and house-folk, as the household servants were called by our Saxon ancestors, that he paid no attention to the altered demeanour of his daughter; so Edith continued to mope and fret unheeded, till her nurse, who was tired of her melancholy humour, told the franklin that her young lady was sick, and required change of air. On receiving this intimation, Redwald sent them both to stay with a sister of his, who was married to a rich burgess of Chester.

Now Chester, though it was not the fine city that it now is, was a place of great importance, even in the days of King Edgar. Its noble churches, castle and goodly market-place, streets and shops, appeared quite wonderful to Edith and her nurse, who had never seen any finer town than the inconsiderable one of Malpas, near their native village of Ouston. There was so much to see and hear on every side that was new and entertaining, that Edith soon ceased to think so

much of her late wickedness; though she still felt very unhappy whenever she remembered poor Selred, and the iron collar he was compelled to wear, on account of her false accusation.

Edith's aunt had several sons about her own age, and a little older, all very rude boys; and in their society the little country maiden soon forgot all her recent sorrow for her fault, and became more self-willed and ungovernable than ever. Young persons who conduct themselves in that way, are never agreeable visitors to any one. Edith's uncle and aunt got tired of her company long before the wayward damsel wished to conclude her stay in the gay city of Chester; and, as she had quite recovered her health and spirits, they told her nurse so, and sent them both home.

Redwald's quiet homestead seemed very dull to Edith, after her uncle's lively house, where she could sit at the window, and look at the people in the streets, and the mummers, the morris-dancers, and the tumblers, with their attendant minstrels and fiddle-de-dees, as the musicians who played on the viols and rebecs were then called. There were plenty of such people in Chester at that time, on account of the royal visitors, who were at the palace where King Edgar then kept court. Edith had also seen King Edgar himself, and his eight tributary kings, at some of the grand pageants which the loyal citizens of Chester had devised to do him honour. She had, therefore, enough to tell her father and the servants when she came home.

It was the beginning of harvest when she returned. The weather was very fine; and everybody was usefully employed, and, of course, happy, unlike herself.

Her brother Edwy had grown a sweet boy in

her absence, and was so playful and engaging, that, in spite of her ill-humour, she was pleased with him, called him her darling and her beauty, and almost smothered him with kisses.

"Edith," said her father, when he returned from the harvest-field in the evening, "be sure you do not lead your little brother out of sight of the homestead; for a fierce were-wolf hath found its way from the Welsh mountains across the Dee, and hath lately been seen in these parts."

"I am not so silly as to be scared by stories of wolves," replied Edith pertly, "as if I were a baby."

"You are a rude girl to answer anything I tell you, in that way, Edith," said her father; "but know, perverse one, that the were-wolf, three nights ago, entered Mag the shepherd's shieling, of which his careless wife had left the door open, and devoured two of his babies in the cradle."

Edith turned pale when she heard this; but she was one of those presumptuous children who always fancy they know better than persons older and wiser than themselves; so she replied,—

"King Edgar hath hunted and killed *all* the wolves in Cheshire and Shropshire since then. We may now go where we like, without fear of being devoured like shepherd Mag's poor babies."

"I would not have you too confident on that point, maiden mine," said her father, "or you may repent it too late; for wolves are sure to attack disobedient children, whenever they come in their way. If you are bold enough to risk facing the were-wolf yourself, I beg you not to endanger my tender darling Edwy, by taking him into the fields."

"Edwy is my darling as well as yours," re-

plied Edith, "and it is not likely I would take him where harm might befall him."

But the very next day, when she saw the pleasant prospect of the harvest from her chamber window, she forgot all that her father had said to her, and violated his positive command

CHAPTER IV.

HARVEST-TIME.—EDITH TAKES EDWY TO THE FIELDS.—THE WERE-WOLF IS ABOUT TO SEIZE THEM.—HE IS CHECKED BY SELRED.—ADVANCE OF THE KING, WHO KILLS THE WOLF.—THE KING MAKES SELRED HIS PAGE, AND TAKES HIM TO CHESTER.—HE RECEIVES THE PRIZE FROM THE EIGHT KINGS.—ESTABLISHMENT OF THE WOLF TRIBUTE.

THE harvest-men had just begun to shear the wheat-crop in the distant field, where the narrow branch of the Dee flowed by; and Edith could just see the waters glittering in the glorious sunshine beneath the waving willows that bordered the stream.

"Oh," said she, "how pleasant it would be to sit under those trees and watch the reapers binding the sheaves; particularly if my sweet brother Edwy were with me, to amuse me with his prattle and pretty play. I am sure there could not be any danger of wolves there, with men at work in all the fields."

Presently she heard her father give orders that all the house-folk, men and maids, should come into one of the home-fields, to heap the barley, and assist in loading it upon the carts; "for," said he, "we must clear that field by noon, as there is some appearance of a storm coming up, which would spoil the barley."

So away they all went to the barley-field, leaving only the nurse to take care of the children, and to cook dinner for the whole household.

Now the nurse having more to do than one pair of hands could well manage—for she had cakes to make and bake, meat to roast, puddings to boil, and vegetables to prepare for the franklin and his men—carried Edwy to his sister, telling her to have a care of him, and to amuse him for a couple of hours, so that he did not come in her way.

This Edith promised faithfully to do; but no sooner was the nurse's back fairly turned, than she took her precious charge by the hand, and ran off to the wheat-field with him as fast as she could make him stir his little legs. When she got down to the river side, she began to gather flowers to fill Edwy's little basket, altogether neglecting her father's cautions and commands. While so engaged, a low sullen growl broke upon her ear; and, looking up, she perceived, to her infinite terror, a large fierce wolf, on the opposite bank of the river, watching her with its terrible eyes.

The wolf had taken his stand at the narrowest part of the stream; so narrow, indeed, was the space that separated them, that the ferocious beast appeared only waiting to measure the distance with his eye before he sprang across.

It was near this spot that Selred had saved little Edwy from a watery grave about two months before, when his life had been endangered by the carelessness of his sister. It was on this very spot that she had made so evil a return for that service by bearing false witness against the preserver of her infant brother, and drawn upon him

a series of cruel persecutions from his hard-hearted uncle.

The remembrance of her wicked conduct flashed upon the mind of the terrified girl at that dreadful moment, and deprived her trembling limbs of the power to flee. All she could do was to scream, "Help, help!—the wolf! the were-wolf! the were-wolf!" then, snatching the frightened Edwy to her bosom, she screamed and wept aloud.

"And oh!" she thought, "I am rightly punished now, for disobeying my father, and for all the other bad things I have done. But my sweet brother has done no harm, and must he be devoured by the wolf, for my fault? Oh, if the injured Selred were but at hand, he would, I am sure, try to save him!"

And Selred was at hand, reaping the tall wheat in his uncle's field adjoining. He heard the agonizing shrieks of his young enemy for help in her distress, and remembered not the heavy blows, nor the long series of hard and injurious treatment, which she had been the means of his suffering; neither did he weigh his own personal peril, from exposing himself to the fangs of a beast of prey. He saw only the danger of the helpless pair, and hastening to their aid, he planted himself courageously before them; eyeing the wolf with a look of stern defiance, and menacing him at the same time with the sickle, which he raised in readiness to defend the sobbing Edith and her infant brother.

The wolf greeted his appearance with a deep angry growl. His eyes glared like fire; his rough hairs bristled round his savage-neck; he gnashed his long white teeth, and, drawing up his back, prepared himself for a spring, which, in all prob-

ability, would have been fatal to the gallant little champion, who continued to brandish the sickle with an intrepid air. Edith, who perceived the deadly purpose of the enraged wolf, clung to his other arm in her mortal terror, while she drew her infant brother to her with a convulsive grasp. At that moment, and before a word could be uttered by either, the twang of a bow-string was heard, and an arrow whistled past the youthful group.

That arrow was charged with their deliverance from the dreadful peril that impended over them. It was aimed by no meaner archer than the King of England himself, who, from the brake behind, had perceived the danger of the children, and launching his unerring shaft at the were-wolf, shot him dead, as he was in the very act of taking his long-meditated spring across the narrow stream that parted him from his prey.

Selred, when he saw the wolf was slain, before he asked whose was the arm that had been interposed for the preservation of his young companions and himself, poured forth his fervent thanks to the merciful God who had rescued them all from the jaws of the ravenous wolf.

"And who art thou, my brave little man, who hast stood so nobly to guard thy little sister, and her infant charge, from the attack of the were-wolf?" asked King Edgar, advancing, and laying his hand on the shoulder of the boy.

"I am a friendless orphan boy," replied Selred, mournfully raising his eyes to the face of his sovereign. "That little maiden, whom I essayed to defend with my sickle, is not my sister, but mine adversary, who hath wrought me much evil; and the fair child over whom she is now weeping for joy of his deliverance, is her brother."

"If this be true, thou hast acted the part of a generous foe, my brave boy," said the king.

"Oh, yes, indeed, indeed he has!" exclaimed Edith, as soon as she could sob out a few words.

"Ah, Selred, can you ever forgive me for my wickedness, in slandering you so basely, and causing you so much distress and suffering?"

"I thought it very hard at the time, Edith," replied Selred; "but the pain I endured is over now, and I freely forgive you, since you appear so very sorry for what you have done. Only I hope you will take more care of your little brother for the time to come."

Edith wept afresh, as she hugged the wondering Edwy to her bosom, and promised amendment a thousand times over. I am happy to say she kept her word, and became very good for the time to come.

"Come!" said King Edgar, turning to Selred, "my gallant little friend, and help me to cut off this grim wolf's head; for I must ride back to Chester with all speed, to show my prize. How say you?—will you go with me?"

"With all my heart," replied the boy, "when I have led these children safely back to their home"

"Thou shalt not need to tarry for that, Selred," said Edith, "for here cometh our nurse, to seek for us."

"Then," said Selred to the king, "I fear I cannot go with thee to Chester, without obtaining my cruel uncle Butred's leave, or he will treat me hardly on my return."

"Thou hast no need to ask leave of any man to obey my bidding, for I am Edgar, thy king," said the monarch; "and I release thee from all thralldom for the time to come, and make thee mine own page."

Selred bowed his knee before his sovereign at these gracious words, and kissed his royal hand. He then, after assisting the king to cut off the wolf's head, threw down his sickle, and ran by his stirrup all the way to Chester.

The other eight kings had just returned from hunting, weary, and without game; and the streets were crowded with people, who seemed disappointed at their want of success. At the appearance of King Edgar, who rode into the city at full speed, bearing the were-wolf's head upon his spear, they rent the air with shouts of exultation, and attended him to the palace with loud and continued acclamations.

"How now, my masters," said King Edgar, when he entered the banqueting-hall, where his vassal kings had just assembled—"have either of ye nobler game to show than mine.

They were all silent, except the King of Scots, who replied,—

"Edgar, thou hast fairly won the bracelets of us."

Then said Edgar, "If they be mine, I will bestow them on this fair boy, who, with no better weapon than his sickle, stood to defend two children in the harvest-field from the fierce wolf whose grim head ye now behold."

There was a general murmur of approbation at the words of the generous Bretwalda. Each of the kings proposed to ransom his bracelet for fifty crowns of gold; and the whole sum was placed in King Edgar's hands, for the use of his young page, when he should come of age, and be fit to possess such wealth.

The Welsh princes, before they left Chester, however, began to complain of the heavy tribute of silver, of gold, and of cattle, which Edgar had

imposed upon them, to be paid annually to England. Thereupon, having been an eye-witness of the mischief which the wolves committed in the border counties, he released them from the tax, on condition of their paying him a yearly tribute of three hundred wolves' heads.

He also offered a reward for the head of every wolf slain in his dominions, which caused them to be so carefully hunted down, that, in three years' time, there was scarcely one of these ferocious animals to be found in England or Wales.

FUNERAL OF THE CONQUEROR;

OR

ANSELM FITZ-ARTHUR.

A TALE OF NORMANDY.

CHAPTER I.

DEPARTURE OF WILLIAM OF NORMANDY FOR ENGLAND.—SIR RALPH FITZ-ARTHUR UNABLE TO ACCOMPANY HIM.—ANCIENT CASTLES.—OCCUPATIONS OF LADIES.—YOUNG ANSELM.—LEARNS TO BE A BLACKSMITH AND FARRIER.—ARRIVAL OF COUNT DE BOULOGNE.

ANSELM FITZ-ARTHUR was the eldest son of a wealthy Norman chief, whose fair domains were situated on the pleasant banks of the river Orne, which flows by the city of Caen, the capital of Lower Normandy. He was born in the reign of the mighty William, Duke of Normandy, who, in the year 1066, rendered himself so famous for his invasion and conquest of England. In that invasion, William was accompanied by the chief nobles and knights in his dominions; but Sir Ralph Fitz-Arthur, being confined to his bed by a wound, received in hunting the deer, was unable to attend his sovereign.

William, who was a very imperious prince, was much displeased at the absence of the brave Fitz-Arthur from his muster. Though informed of the cause, he chose to treat it as a mere pretext, on the

THE FUNERAL OF THE CONQUEROR.



Lady Fitz-Arthur and her Children.



The Count de Boulogne and Fitz-Arthur.

part of the knight, for remaining in his own castle, with his lady and two fair children, Anselm and Maude; so he bade Fitz-Arthur's squire, Endo, return to his master, and tell him that he would one day remember him for evil.

When Sir Ralph Fitz-Arthur heard his sovereign's message, he was troubled; for these were very barbarous times, when princes little regarded law or justice, but did just as they pleased with the lives and properties of their subjects. They were, too, times of wrong and of violence, when every man was afraid of his neighbour. Those who could afford it, built castles, and fortified houses, with moats round about them, wherein they shut themselves up. When any one was seen to approach, the sentinel on guard looked out through the loopholes, in the walls, to ascertain whether it was friend or foe, before the draw-bridge was lowered to admit them over the moat. The stranger then had to answer a great many questions at the embattled gateway, before the warder would draw up the massy portcullis, and admit him into the court-yard of the castle.

The portcullis was a sort of sliding door, made of iron bars, with long spikes at the edge; it was fixed in a groove over the gateway, and was drawn up or let down by means of chains working in pulleys. There is one of these ancient portcullises at the Tower of London, in the gateway of the building commonly called the Bloody Tower, opposite the Traitor's Gate.

In the days of which I speak, every castle had a portcullis, and every person who was lord of a castle had vassals and serfs under him, who paid him tribute, and treated him with greater homage than is now offered to a reigning prince. Such was the custom of the feudal times, as

those days were called. We have better laws and customs in our days, and justice is now so impartially administered to all ranks of people, that no one is suffered to infringe on the rights of another. Even the king never dreams of compelling any one to fight for him, if he does not himself wish to be a soldier.

It was, however, very different in the eleventh century. Sir Ralph Fitz-Arthur, therefore, made his vassals bring a great quantity of provisions into his castle, and ordered all who were capable of bearing arms, to come and aid him in its defence, in case the Duke of Normandy should think proper to lay siege to the castle. But the duke had enough for himself and his fierce soldiers to do in conquering England, without making war on one of his own people; so Sir Ralph remained unmolested in his castle, with his lady and his children.

Anselm and Maude were infants at the time, or they would have found it very dull to be kept within so narrow a space as the castle-grounds, which were enclosed by high stone-walls, and round flanking-towers, beyond which none were, for many months, permitted to stir. After some time, Sir Ralph Fitz-Arthur, finding his liege showed no intention of returning to Normandy, relaxed the strictness of his cautions, and resumed his usual sports of hunting, hawking, fishing, and shooting at a mark. These were all very well in fine weather; but when there was rain or snow, the feudal chiefs must have felt the time pass heavily enough; for there was not one in a hundred of them who could read or write, and consequently they could derive no enjoyment from pursuits of that kind. The ladies, who practised knitting, spinning, embroidery,

and weaving tapestry, were much better off. They could always occupy themselves usefully, though sometimes laboriously; but even hard labour itself is not so wearisome as idleness.

Young Anselm Fitz-Arthur often experienced the miseries of idleness, when, during a long succession of rainy days, he was prevented from accompanying his father to the chase and had nothing in the world to do. He would play with the dogs, or ramble from stall to stall in the spacious stables, and pat all the horses in turn, till he had paid his respects to every one, beginning with his father's war-horse, Rollo, and ending with his own white palfrey, Papillon, not forgetting old blind Malpas, the foot-foundered grizzle gray, who was only used now and then to carry corn to the mill. But Anselm soon found it a very dull thing to play with dogs and pat horses all day long, and often felt disposed to envy Jacques and Pierre their occupation of threshing in his father's barn.

One day he found his way down to the forge, where Bernardin the blacksmith, and Philip the farrier, were employed in making horse-shoes, and shoeing their lord's horses. Every petty chieftain was in those days called a *seigneur*, or lord, by his vassals, whom the hard laws then existing enabled him to employ in working for a very trifling remuneration.

Anselm was greatly amused in watching the process of forging horse-shoes, and afterwards seeing the horses shod. For want of other employment, he came every day to observe the proceedings of Bernardin and Philip, till at length he became so deeply interested in their work, that he expressed a great desire of acquiring their art.

Bernardin and Philip were astonished, and somewhat shocked, at their young lord wishing to degrade his high rank by stooping to the acquisition of their servile crafts. But the more they reasoned on the impropriety of his griming his face and delicate hands in their murky employment, the more earnestly was the boy set on carrying his point. At length, by dint of persuasions and caresses, he persuaded them to accede to his wish, of privately initiating him into the arts of farriery and of forging shoes for horses.

Fitz-Arthur no longer passed whole days in wandering about the dog-kennel and the stable, with occasional visits to the armoury, or to the work-room where his sister Maude was engaged at her tapestry-frame, or spinning-wheel, and amusing himself with tangling her wool, and hiding her shears. He now spent his time at the forge, where, arrayed in the sooty tunic of Bernardin's son, Roger, he took lessons in the craft of a smith, and learnt to hammer a shoe-nail out of a piece of iron.

Roger was a merry, good-humoured peasant-boy, about Fitz-Arthur's own age. He could not help grinning when he placed a great piece of red-hot iron on the anvil before his young lord, and saw how awkwardly he handled the hammer, and how he winked when the bright shower of sparks flew about him for fear they should fly into his eyes.

Fitz-Arthur was very much puzzled at first, it is true, and somewhat mortified at observing Roger's grins. But he applied himself so perseveringly to his task, that, after a few unsuccessful attempts, he had the satisfaction of fashioning a shoe-nail, which Bernardin pronounced "to be as good a nail as if Roger himself had made it."

He was next initiated into the more important art of forging horse-shoes—in which, in process of time, he displayed so much skill, that Bernardin could not help saying—"It is a thousand pities, young sir, that you were born the heir of a wealthy knight, for you would have made the best blacksmith in all Normandy."

Sir Ralph Fitz-Arthur, meantime, perfectly unconscious of the proficiency his heir was making in the murky craft of smithery, wondered at his indifference to the woodland sports which had heretofore been his delight; and the Lady Fitz-Arthur knew not how to account for the sooty marks on the fine linen and embroidered vest of her son.

Every article of dress, especially the garments of persons of quality, was so expensive in those days, that his lady mother bestowed a very sharp rebuke upon her son for the slovenly appearance of his shirts, tunics and vests; and charged him not to let her see them in that condition again. So finding himself precluded from improving his skill at the forge, he besought Philip to instruct him in the art of farriery, which he considered a more cleanly employment than the craft of a smith. By bestowing more than ordinary care to preserve his upper garments from the defilements of sooty fingers, he was enabled to pursue his new amusement undisturbed, till he was able to shoe, not only his own gentle palfrey, but the wildest war-horse in the castle-stables, without fear.

The grooms, lackeys, and men-at-arms in the castle, stood amazed at the proficiency of their young lord in the science of farriery. The knight, his father, had not the slightest suspicion that he knew anything about it, till one day it

happened that the Count de Boulogne, nephew to William the Conqueror, came to the castle. Having discovered that his horse had cast a shoe, he requested Sir Ralph Fitz-Arthur to permit his farrier to replace it, while he took a cup of spiced wine with him and his lady. Sir Ralph, inviting the count to enter his hospitable hall, ordered his squire to take his guest's charger to the forge, and to direct Philip to shoe him with care and speed.

CHAPTER IV.

ANSELM SHOES THE FIERCE HORSE OF THE COUNT DE BOULOGNE.
—IS DISCOVERED BY HIS FATHER.—THE COUNT PROPOSES TO
HIM TO JOIN WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR.—HIS REFUSAL.—
DEATH OF HIS FATHER.—HIS CASTLE AND LANDS WICKEDLY
SEIZED BY WILLIAM.—POPISH SUPERSTITIONS.

NOW the Count de Boulogne's horse was of so fiery a spirit, that the squire had much ado to lead him down to the forge; and Philip, when he saw how he rolled his eyes and champed his bit, fell into a great fright, and said, "Out upon my lord for sending his poor servant such a perilous job. I would as soon undertake to shoe a dragon as this horse."

"Nay, but it must be done, Philip, and that you know full well, since our lord has willed it," said the squire. "Moreover, this mettlesome prancer belongeth to Sir Eustace, Count of Boulogne, the nephew of our sovereign duke, William, the Conqueror of England, who is already wroth with Sir Ralph, because he went not with him to win merry England. If his kinsman be denied so simple a courtesy at this castle as the

shoeing of his steed, nothing short of fire and sword will be the portion of us all, root and branch."

"Fire and sword, and the chance of escape, withal, for those who have sound heads and whole limbs, will be better for Philip the farrier than the certainty of a broken skull by a kick from yonder perilous beast," cried the timid serf.

"Beshrew thee for a paltry coward," cried the squire, angrily. "Here, Bernardin, Roger, ho! come hither, and shoe this horse."

Bernardin and Roger drew back, protesting "that they were poor blacksmiths, not farriers; and, therefore, must be held excused from undertaking so dangerous an office as shoeing the steed of the Count de Boulogne."

"And must my good lord be brought into peril of loss of life and lands, for want of a courageous farrier?" exclaimed the squire; "for well ye all wot, that William of Normandy doth only lie in wait for some pretext against Sir Ralph, in order to deprive him of both."

"If there be any one who hath skill and courage enough to essay this matter, it is our young lord Anselm, alone," said Philip; "for he han dleth a horse better than any of us."

"And wouldst thou see the noble boy imperil life or limb, by undertaking an office from which those whose duty it is shrink back like false craven slaves?" cried the squire, giving way to a burst of passion.

"Hold, hold, Louis," interposed Anselm, who had hurried to the forge. "Thy zeal for thy lord's service carries thee too far, my good Louis," continued he, laying his hand on the arm which the squire had raised to chastise the frightened farrier.

"I will essay to shoe the horse myself, if you will assist in holding it, and Roger will hand me the tools."

"Oh, my dear young sir, are you aware that you will risk your life by this rashness?" whined Roger, piteously clinging about Anselm's legs.

"Do I not risk my life every day, in sport—in hunting the wild boar and the wolf; in climbing the tall trees; and in stemming the rapid streams? and shall I hesitate encountering a trifling danger for a father's sake?" said he, flinging off his embroidered mantle and vest, and stripping his shirt-sleeves above his elbows.

"Oh, master, master mine! have a care of what you do," cried Philip, who was really alarmed at the danger to which the gallant youth was about to expose himself; for the horse appeared at that moment perfectly ungovernable.

"Softly, Louis, softly," said Anselm; "you fret the high spirit of the good steed by handling him too roughly. He will not brook the curb, I see." He then took the bridle out of the squire's hand, and led him forward a few paces, soothing and caressing him at the same time, till he became perfectly tractable. Then conducting him to the farrier's traverse, he made the bridle fast to a hook in the wall, and, with the assistance of Roger, who held the shoe and nails at a cautious distance, he proceeded to business.

Meanwhile, the Count de Boulogne, having partaken of refreshments with Sir Ralph, suddenly exclaimed, "I must look to the shoeing of my horse, for though a good beast, he is ever dangerous to menials; I hope he hath not harmed thy farrier through his mettlesome temper."

"We had better go and see," said Sir Ralph, who could not help thinking that his guest was

very inconsiderate not to have warned his poor servants of the temper of his horse.

When they came to the forge, they found the servants and retainers gathered together before the farrier's traverse; and, to the great surprise of both the knight and his guest, a stripling lad was performing the perilous task of shoeing the fiery steed of the count.

"Ha!" cried the Count de Boulogne, turning angrily to Sir Ralph Fitz-Arthur; "and dost thou treat me, the nephew of thy sovereign, with no more respect than to allow my matchless charger to be shod by the 'prentice-boy of thy vile farrier?"

"What, ho! Philip," shouted Sir Ralph, "hast thou turned fool, or art thou mad, to trust the noblest horse in Christendom to thy unlucky imp, Roger, who hath scarcely wit enough to be trusted with the shoeing of an ass?"

Here Anselm, having concluded his operation, raised his head with an arch smile, and displayed to the wondering eyes of Sir Ralph Fitz-Arthur, not the broad, grotesque features of the swarthy young smith, Roger, but the bright, fair face of his own son. The countenance of the boy was crimsoned by his mingled feelings of pleasure at having achieved a perilous undertaking, and of dread at having incurred his father's anger.

"Ah, thou naughty varlet," said the knight, "how is it that I find the heir of Fitz-Arthur practising the low craft of a farrier?"

"For lack of something better to do, I acquired this craft some few months ago," replied the youth, "having heard that, 'In all knowledge there is profit.' Had I not been fortunately able to perform that office for him, my Lord Eustace of Boulogne's good steed might still have lacked his

shoe, since there was no other farrier in the castle that would adventure to nail one to the hoof of a beast of his condition."

"Thou art a gallant boy; and I would I had a son of thy temper," said the Count de Boulogne, patting young Fitz-Arthur's head, as he led the horse to him, and put the bridle-rein into his hand. "It is a pity," continued he, "that thy fine spirit is not employed to better purpose."

Count Eustace then related to Anselm how Duke William of Normandy had invaded England, with his nobles, knights, and valiant retainers, and defeated and slain Harold, the last Saxon king of that island, at the battle of Hastings. How he had marched, victoriously, to London, and been crowned King of England, in Westminster Abbey, by the hand of Aldred, Archbishop of York, and had endowed his brave followers with the lands and heritage of the conquered Saxons. Seven years had passed away since Duke William was crowned King of England, but there were still many of the Saxon thanes who resisted his authority, and held out against him, under the command of their brave leader, the mighty Hereward, in the marshes of Croyland and Cambridgeshire; the count, therefore, strongly urged the boy to offer his services to the Conqueror, as a volunteer, to assist him in quelling these insurgents, as he called the brave Saxons.

"No," replied Anselm; "I will never lend the aid of my arm, feeble as it may be, in assisting to crush the defenders of a country that has been unjustly invaded by a foreign foe."

"But is not that foe your liege lord, audacious boy?" said the count, with a frown. "And will he not give broad lands, and mighty privileges,

to those who serve him well, in helping to destroy the rebel Saxons who resist his authority."

"If any foreign foe were to invade fair Normandy, my sovereign should see how boldly I could fight to drive him back from my native land," said the boy, with kindling eyes. "But I would not be enriched with the spoils of the hapless Saxons. I have the prospect of a goodly heritage of mine own, wherewith I am well contented, and covet none other."

The warlike count told Anselm, "that he was a mean-spirited brat to prefer shoeing horses to deeds of arms, under the banner of his sovereign;" and added, "that he hoped he would be compelled to follow that servile craft for his daily bread, since nature had evidently intended him rather for a paltry mechanic than a Norman chief."

"It were better to do so than to become a robber and oppressor," replied the heir of Fitz-Arthur, turning calmly away as the angry count vaulted on his fiery steed, and, without making the slightest acknowledgment to Sir Ralph Fitz-Arthur, rode off at full speed.

Not long after this, William the Conqueror visited his Norman dominions; and Sir Ralph Fitz-Arthur fell sick and died, about the time of his arrival. No sooner did William hear that the worthy knight was dead, than he sent a strong military force, and seized his lands, which he had long coveted, and turned his widow and children out of the castle, in which the noble family of Fitz-Arthur had dwelt for generations.

William bribed the corrupt Church of Rome to silence respecting this atrocious deed, by dividing the lands of Fitz-Arthur with the Abbot of St. Benedict, and promising to build a stately abbey

and church, dedicated to St. Stephen, on the spot where the castle then stood. So the abbot and monks of Caen not only winked at the crime which their sovereign had committed, but they also wickedly became partakers of the fruits of his iniquity. They lulled the reproaches of his conscience, and all fear of the wrath of God, by promising to sing Latin prayers for the repose of his soul ; as if that could make any atonement for his guilty deeds, or avert the judgment of his offended Lord.

It was by such delusions as these, that the monks, in those dark ages, used to gain power over the minds of kings and great persons, whom they countenanced in acts of spoliation, provided that, in penance for their sins, they acted with due liberality to the Romish Church. The effect of this superstition was to lull the guilty into a fatal security, which prevented them from perceiving the necessity of repentance, and endeavouring to make amends to those whom they had injured. But the monks gained great wealth by it, so they never tried to teach those who had done amiss, the true and only means of escaping from the wrath to come.

William the Conqueror had committed many dreadful acts of cruelty and revenge against the poor Saxons, who endeavoured to defend their native country against his rapacious Norman robbers. He had caused the eyes of many of them to be put out, and had chopped off the hands and feet of others, who had revolted against him.

Now it is a great crime for subjects to rebel against a lawful king, and to disturb the quiet order of government which has been established by the wisdom of their forefathers, for the good of all ranks of people. William, however, was not king of

England, either by right of birth, or by choice of the great council of the nation. He was a foreign conqueror, who came over on false pretences, to overthrow the laws and liberties of a country to which he could have no just claim: it was right and proper, therefore, for the Saxons to withstand his ambitious designs; for it is the duty of every one to defend his native land against foreign invaders.

There is an old proverb which says, and I am afraid, in many instances, too truly, that "Might overcomes right." This was the case with the Normans and Saxons. William of Normandy was the strongest; so he overcame the poor Saxons in every contest, and, as I said before, treated those who fell into his hands in the most barbarous manner.

There were moments, no doubt, in which his conscience troubled him, on account of the innocent blood he had shed, and the wrongs and oppressions of which he had been guilty. But, instead of seeking to make amends to the families of the sufferers, and beseeching the pardon of Almighty God for the evils he had done, he contented himself with building this fine abbey, on the lands which he had torn from the heir of Fitz-Arthur. He was so superstitious as to suppose that the masses which the monks were paid for singing for him there, would avert the vengeance of his heavenly Master for these crimes; and he went on sinning and committing fresh outrages, till he met his death in the town of Mantes, in France: of which I shall tell you hereafter.

CHAPTER III

LADY FITZ-ARTHUR AND HER CHILDREN RUDELY EXPELLED FROM HER DOMAINS.—THEY TAKE REFUGE IN THE SMITHY, AND ANSELM SETS UP AS A FARRIER.—IS VISITED BY THE ABBOT OF ST. BENEDICT.—REFUSES TO BECOME A MONK.—CIVIL WAR IN NORMANDY.

WHEN Lady Fitz-Arthur was rudely expelled, with her orphan children, from the pleasant castle on the banks of the Orne, she knew not whither to go. The vassals of her late husband had been removed, by order of the Conqueror, to other lands; and on the same day their fires were extinguished, and their hearths left desolate.

The servants of the monks of St. Benedict, and the soldiers of the Norman sovereign, spread themselves like locusts over the heritage of Fitz-Arthur, and pillaged every place. Having done that, they set about demolishing the castle, while the widowed lady remained, weeping without the gates of her late home, and vainly entreated them to forbear.

Maude buried her tearful face in her mother's bosom, for fear of the savage soldiers, who addressed rude taunts to the sorrowful group, as they passed and re-passed to and from the castle, bidding them "Begone; for they were in the way!" Young Fitz-Arthur stood beside his mother and sister, sternly and silently watching the desolation of his home, till he could endure that bitter sight, and the insolence of those who were thus employed, no longer. Dashing away the scalding tears, which, in spite of his endeavours

vours to restrain them, overflowed his cheeks, he said, "Let us go hence, my mother."

Lady Fitz-Arthur raised her tear-swollen eyes, and replied, "Whither can we go, my son?"

"God will direct us, mother," returned the youth. "Surely His blue sky shall be our canopy, and His green earth our bed, though men deny us shelter."

"And how shall we procure food, brother Anselm?" asked the weeping Maude.

"By the labour of these hands, sister mine," replied Fitz-Arthur; "God has blessed me with health and strength, and I will work for ye."

"Alas, my sweet Anselm," said his mother, "these are pretty words of thine; but what canst thou do whereby to earn our living?"

"I have a trade," replied the youth in a lively tone.

"A trade!" exclaimed his mother, in surprise.

"I can forge horse-shoes, and shoe horses," returned Fitz-Arthur.

"Alack, that ever a Fitz-Arthur should defile his noble hands in acquiring such servile crafts," exclaimed Maude, indignantly.

"Softly, softly, my sweet sister," said Fitz-Arthur, gently drawing the weeping girl to his bosom; "didst thou never hear the wise saying, 'In all knowledge there is profit?' and which of the twain thinkest thou is the best, to work or to starve?"

"I would rather starve a thousand times than see my brother practise the vile crafts of a blacksmith and a farrier," said Maude.

"I have practised both many a day and oft, for mine own amusement, when thou, sister Maude, wert twirling the spindle or embroidering dainty scarfs and kerchiefs, by our lady mother's

side. Ye were neither of ye a whit the worse for my employment," said he, smiling.

"Because we knew it not," said Maude.

"And now, when ye shall be aware that I am practising that knowledge, for the dear sakes of a mother and a sister, whom I shall thus preserve from beggary, will ye deem that even the noble hands of a Fitz-Arthur can be degraded by working at a servile craft?" asked Anselm, tenderly regarding Maude and Lady Fitz-Arthur.

They both flung themselves upon the neck of the generous youth, and wept, till even the hard heart of one of the soldiers of the Conqueror was moved to pity, and he came, and privily restored to Lady Fitz-Arthur a bracelet of gold, which he had taken as his share of the spoil, from her apartment in the castle.

"Praise be to God," said the heir of Fitz-Arthur; "this gold will buy iron wherewith I shall be able to commence my trade. But for this, I must have been content to work for my penny-fee as a hired labourer, at some master-blacksmith's forge."

In those days, it must be remembered, that no craftsman or labourer received higher wages than a penny per day, which, cheap as things then were, would have been too small a sum for the maintenance of three persons.

Night was now approaching, and Lady Fitz-Arthur and Maude began to wonder where they should find a shelter. Anselm himself was in some perplexity about it; but, putting on a cheerful countenance, he said, "Let us go down to the forge; it is nearly a mile from the castle, and, perhaps, the spoilers may have forgotten to destroy it, in their general work of desolation."

Thither the houseless little family proceeded,

and, to their great joy, found that this humble homestead had, indeed, escaped from the sweeping destruction that had passed over every other dwelling, however insignificant, on the domains of Fitz-Arthur.

The forge, the traverse, and the cottage, in which dwelt the united families of Bernardin and Philip, were, however, abandoned by their late inhabitants. The noble widow and orphans of their deceased lord, Sir Ralph Fitz-Arthur, esteemed themselves only too happy in being permitted to occupy the rude beds of rushes, which had been freshly strewn by old Joan, the mother of these lowly craftsmen, that morning, before the terror of their sovereign's proclamation had compelled them to commence their journey to one of his royal demesnes in Upper Normandy.

This spot had not been pillaged; so Lady Fitz-Arthur found herself in possession of the rude furniture—wooden trenchers, iron porridge-pot, and earthen bowls—of the blacksmith's and farrier's family. Glad enough was the high-born lady of the castle to obtain these necessary articles, which had been abandoned by the serfs of her late husband in their hasty emigration.

The bellows, the anvil, the hammers, and all the other implements in the forge and farriery, were the property of the deceased lord of the soil, who had provided them for his own convenience, allowing his serfs, Bernardin and Philip, the privilege of using them for their private business, when his own jobs had been executed. So the young Fitz-Arthur considered these tools as his lawful property, and regarded them with some satisfaction, as affording the means of his earning a subsistence for his mother and sister.

The next day Fitz-Arthur exchanged his em

broidered mantle, pourpoint and hose for Roger's sooty tunic, of coarse flax, which had been left by the young smith hanging on the nail against the wall of the traverse. Having rekindled the extinguished fire in the forge, he proceeded to heat a lump of iron, which he found had been left among the quenched embers.

Presently the smithy resounded with the brisk strokes of his hammer. He was busily engaged in fashioning a horse-shoe, when the Abbot of St. Benedict, attended by some of the monks of his convent, and a party of Norman soldiers, presented himself before the forge, and not recognising the youthful blacksmith, demanded, "Who he was, and wherefore he had presumed to take possession of that forge without leave or license from the order of St. Benedict, to whom the manor and all its dependencies had been granted by the Conqueror?"

"I ask no man's leave or license for the use of that which of right pertaineth to me alone," replied the youth, sternly regarding the haughty priest. "Those who boast themselves of possessing these lands, in virtue of the Conqueror's grant, are partakers of the wrong and robbery which he hath committed against the heir of Fitz-Arthur."

"The heir of Fitz-Arthur!" echoed the abbot; "and where is he?"

"Here!" returned the undaunted youth, stepping forth from the shed and confronting the abbot with a fearless countenance. "Here, Lord Abbot, stands the ruined and much-wronged heir of Fitz-Arthur, to answer thee, if thou hast aught to say against his pursuing a servile craft on one poor corner of his father's wide domains, to pre-

serve a widowed mother and orphan sister from starving."

The abbot was covered with confusion at this bold address, and withdrew without uttering a syllable in reply. The next day he sent one of his monks to Fitz-Arthur, with an invitation for him to enter the monastery of St. Benedict, and there to become an ecclesiastic; offering, at the same time, in event of his consenting to embrace a monkish life, to provide for the lady Fitz-Arthur and her daughter, Maude, by admitting them into a convent of nuns at Caen.

A convent was, in those days, considered as the only honourable refuge for persons of rank who had suffered reverses of fortune. The ruined family of Fitz-Arthur were, accordingly, strongly urged by the Benedictine monks to accept the abbot's offer; but they firmly and unanimously refused to avail themselves of it.

The next day the abbot himself came, to remonstrate with Fitz-Arthur on the impropriety of his preferring his present miserable abode, and the degrading calling of a smith, to a life of cloistered ease. He represented to him all the power, the privileges and the immunities which the Romish clergy enjoyed, in the hope of inducing him to profess himself a monk; by which means the wily abbot knew he should be freed from any dispute relative to the possession of the lands of Fitz-Arthur.

"As for my present employment," replied Anselm, "the motives for which I have taken it up are sufficient to ennoble any calling that is not absolutely base. . . . Therefore, my Lord Abbot, I shall continue to pursue it, in preference to pronouncing the vows of a monk of St. Benedict, against my conscience."

"But your mother and your sister?" said the abbot.

"They have no more inclination to enter a cloister than myself," returned Fitz-Arthur. "An unjust sovereign has deprived us of every earthly possession save each other; and I pray you, my Lord Abbot, not to destroy our last comfort, by separating us. Surely the mighty Conqueror of England, and the rich Abbot of St. Benedict, may allow the ruined heir of Fitz-Arthur to retain possession of this last miserable remnant of the wide inheritance of his forefathers."

The abbot could not, for shame, reply to the manly appeal of the noble youth, whom he had united with his sovereign to despoil of his patrimony. He therefore allowed him to remain unmolested, with his mother and sister, at the smithy, where, for some time, the heir of Fitz-Arthur continued to practise the servile business of a farrier and a blacksmith.

The Lady Fitz-Arthur and her daughter Maude performed the household work meanwhile, and employed their leisure moments in spinning sheets, and linen and woollen garments, which they afterwards constructed for Anselm and themselves.

But in the course of years great troubles arose in Normandy, on account of the frequent rebellions of Robert, the eldest son of the Conqueror, against his father, who had promised to make him Duke of Normandy, and then refused to perform his engagement. Robert very undutifully took up arms to gain by force that which his father was unwilling to resign peaceably; and the whole country was, in consequence, involved in the horrors of civil war.

One day it happened that a fierce skirmish took place, near the city of Caen, between the troops

of the rebellious Robert and a party of the Conqueror's adherents, in which William's troops were defeated. No quarter was given on either side in that battle; both parties were very barbarous; a great slaughter ensued; and those of the vanquished party who had fleet horses, fled with great speed towards Rouen, in hopes of escaping the swords of the victors, who pursued hard at their heels.

CHAPTER IV.

PERIL OF THE COUNT DE BOULOGNE.—HE IS SAVED BY ANSELM.—NORMANDY INVADED BY FRANCE.—ANSELM JOINS THE ARMY.—OBTAINS DISTINCTION.—DEATH OF THE CONQUEROR.—ANSELM OBTAINS LEAVE TO VISIT HIS MOTHER.—FUNERAL PROCESSION.—ANSELM FORBIDS THE FUNERAL OBSEQUIES OF THE CONQUEROR.—HIS CLAIM ACKNOWLEDGED BY DUKE HENRY.—RECEIVES COMPENSATION FOR HIS ESTATE.—HIS MOTHER, HIS SISTER, AND HIMSELF, RESTORED TO THEIR RANK.

FITZ-ARTHUR, who had been at work later than usual that day, was just about to extinguish the fire in his forge, when the mingled clamours of the retreat and pursuit of flying squadrons reached his ears. He came to the entrance of his shed, to watch whether any would pass on that bank of the river Orne, when a party of Duke Robert's soldiers rode by at full speed; one of whom shouted to him:

"What, ho! master farrier, hast thou seen aught of a knight with a tawny scarf over his hauberk, and a plume of eagle's feathers in his helm?" Fitz-Arthur shook his head. The other continued: "A hundred crowns of gold are offered by Duke Robert for his head."

"All the wealth of Normandy, with the spoils of England to boot, should not tempt me to sell the life of another, be he whom he may," said Fitz-Arthur. The soldier heard him not—he was already out of sight, hurrying on in quest of the fugitive for whom so large a reward had been offered. Close behind, with his saddle and trappings stained with blood, came the very knight described, wearing the tawny scarf and the eagle's plume.

He was wounded, and was vainly urging his gallant charger forward, but the horse was lame.

"For the love of Heaven, kind smith," cried he, "have pity upon me, and see what is the matter with my horse's foot!"

Then Fitz-Arthur perceived that it was the Count de Boulogne, who had, some years previously, made so uncourteous a return for his father's hospitality. Not being sorry at an opportunity to repay good for evil, he cried:

"Thy foes are forward, count! They have set a goodly price upon thine head; nevertheless, thou shalt escape by the fleetness of thy good steed, when I shall have removed that nail which the unskilful farrier who shod him last hath driven into his foot."

"And does the nephew of the Conqueror owe his life to the generosity of an humble farrier?" exclaimed the count. Fitz-Arthur took the charger's foot upon his knee, and, with equal skill and courage, proceeded to remove the nail.

"Have a care, gentle youth, that the hot-blooded steed harm thee not," said the count, "for he is a perilous beast to shoe."

"Sir Count," replied Anselm, "I know it full well; for I have shod that horse before."

"Indeed!" cried the count; "then surely I should know thee!"

The youth flung off the rough fur cap that had hitherto concealed his features, and said: "Hast thou forgotten the heir of Fitz-Arthur, Sir Count, whom thou didst wish might be reduced to practise the servile craft of farriery for his daily bread? Thou hast had thy wish, Eustace de Boulogne; but it was through the wrongful oppression of thine uncle, the Conqueror, as men do style him. Well it was for thee that thou didst call no meaner farrier than Anselm Fitz-Arthur to thine aid this day. Now, ride on for thy life, Sir Count, for I hear the pursuit behind; but see thou turn not to the right—for that way went those who offered crowns of gold for thine head!"

The Count de Boulogne had no time to return acknowledgments, for his foes were approaching. He set spurs to his gallant steed, and the noble animal, relieved from pain, bounded forward like an arrow, and presently bore his rider to the outposts of his uncle's army, which was encamped at no great distance.

The following day, the count came to the forge, and offered Fitz-Arthur a noble reward for the service he had rendered him. The youth declined his gifts. "The action," said he, "which I have performed, cost me nothing but the sacrifice of a feeling, which, if indulged, would have rendered me hateful in my own eyes, and displeasing in the sight of Heaven. Therefore will I take no reward for what I have done."

"Surely," exclaimed the count, "so fine a spirit, instead of wasting its energies in a smithy, ought to be employed in the service of Normandy, which is threatened with invasion by the King of France."

"Is my country threatened with invasion?" exclaimed Fitz-Arthur, with flashing eyes.

"The armies of France have already crossed the frontier," returned the count.

"Then will I, forgetting the wrongs I have received from its sovereign, fight for the defence of my native land, though I have no better weapon than this tool of my craft," cried Anselm, striking his hammer fiercely upon the anvil.

"Thou shalt have both horse and weapon at thy need, brave youth," returned the count.

"Thou shalt be my squire, if thou wilt, and, ere long, I trust, thou wilt win the golden spurs of knighthood in the service of thy country."

"But, my mother and my sister!" said Fitz-Arthur, looking towards the rude shed that sheltered them.

"Go, go, my son!" said Lady Fitz-Arthur, advancing from the humble cottage; "fight for Normandy, and leave us to the care of Him who hath promised his especial protection to the widow and the orphan."

Fitz-Arthur gave his mother the leathern bag that contained the little sum which he had laid by to purchase more iron. Then, bidding her and his sister Maude a tender farewell, he exchanged the murky dress of a smith, for the steel hauberk and helm, and followed the banner of Count Eustace de Boulogne, to fight against the armies of the French king.

The contest was long and doubtful; for not only was Robert of Normandy leagued with France against his father, but many of the discontented people espoused his cause, and several towns and castles of Normandy were in his hands.

William the Conqueror was engaged, in another

part of his dominions, in fighting against his rebellious son, Robert; and so it happened, that he and Fitz-Arthur never met. Under the banner of the Count de Boulogne, who was opposed to the King of France, Fitz-Arthur behaved with such valour, and performed so many noble deeds, that he was adjudged by the Norman chiefs to be deserving of the golden spurs.

Soon after this, William the Conqueror met his death through an accident that befell him while assisting in burning the town of Mantes, and he expired in the Abbey of St. Gervas, near Rouen, on the 9th of September, 1087.

The Normans were then in a greater state of perplexity than ever; for no one knew which of his sons would succeed him as Duke of Normandy. William Rufus, his second son, in his haste to secure the kingdom of England for himself, left the body of his father unburied, at Rouen, and set sail for England, where he caused himself to be proclaimed king, and was crowned at Westminster.

Robert, the eldest, surnamed the Unready, was conscience-stricken for his late undutiful rebellion against his father, which he considered had been the cause of his death. Therefore, instead of taking advantage of the armies he had in the field, to make himself master of the duchy, he shut himself up in a monastery, and performed a succession of penances for his crime. He thus left his youngest brother, Henry, to give what orders he pleased respecting his father's funeral, and, if he chose, to assume the ducal authority.

Eustace de Boulogne, being uncertain which of his cousins would claim his allegiance, remained in a state of inactivity, and readily consented to

Anselm's petition, for leave of absence, to visit his mother and sister.

Fitz-Arthur had not seen these beloved relations for a long time; for his general had never been able to spare him from the army before. He now earnestly longed to behold them again.

Night was closing in when he drew near the scenes of his childhood. He could not repress the bitter tears that filled his eyes when the white spires and stately arches of the new-built abbey of St. Stephen's rose, in all its solemn splendour, before him, on the spot once occupied by the gray towers of his father's castle.

While he yet paused to gaze upon a scene once so familiar,—now so strange,—the abbey bells began to toll a death-knell. Soon he perceived a train of horsemen, clothed in black array, with lighted torches, whose red glare gleamed far over hill and dale, and was reflected in the dark waters of the Orne, along whose banks they slowly wound. They were following a plumed and canopied bier, which was preceded and attended by a procession of monks, chanting a Latin dirge.

"It is the funeral of the Conqueror," said an aged peasant, by the wayside, in reply to Fitz-Arthur's question.

All the bells in Caen now began to toll in dismal unison with the knell which the great bell of St. Stephen's abbey was sounding for its mighty founder.

"They are going to bury him in his own abbey of St. Stephen's, which he founded for that purpose," said another of the spectators.

"That abbey was founded on wrong, and its stones were raised by robbery. I, the rightful lord of the soil whereon it stands, will claim mine

own this night," exclaimed Fitz-Arthur, pressing forward.

He entered the church, and, shrouding himself from observation behind one of the pillars, awaited with a beating heart the approach of the funeral procession of his sovereign. It entered with all the solemn pomp of regal state, accompanied with the imposing ceremonials of the Romish Church. The coffin, adorned with the ducal crown of Normandy, and the royal diadem of England, was borne on a black velvet bier, whose lofty canopy was surmounted with sable plumes. It was carried by nobles and knights in armour, and surrounded by bishops, bearing large wax tapers, and white-robed priests, singing the *Miserere*. His son, Prince Henry, in his long black mantle of estate (as a princely robe was then called), attended as chief mourner; and thus did the remains of the mighty Conqueror of England proceed down the long aisles of St. Stephen's abbey, to the grave prepared in the chancel.

It was then that the heir of Fitz-Arthur stood forth, and addressed the bishops and mourners in these words:—

"I forbid you to lay the body of William of Normandy in that grave."

The priests and mourners stood aghast at this bold interruption to the burial-service of the sovereign; and Prince Henry, advancing to the front of the bier, said—

"Who art thou, audacious one, who hast profanely dared to disturb these obsequies?"

"I am the rightful owner of the ground whereon thou standest, Henry of Normandy," replied Fitz-Arthur. "Thy father took occasion of my orphan state to despoil me of mine inheritance. He thrust my widowed mother, my sister, and

myself, forth from our castle, which he lawlessly demolished, and built this abbey on its site; and I charge ye all, as ye shall answer in the great and dreadful day of judgment, that ye lay not the bones of the oppressor on the hearth of my fathers!"

There was a deep and awful pause throughout the church at these words, which was at length broken by a general murmur from the spectators—"It is the heir of Fitz-Arthur who hath spoken."

"Who art thou?" demanded Prince Henry.

"I am Anselm Fitz-Arthur, the son of Sir Ralph Fitz-Arthur, the lord of this land, and I claim mine own patrimony," replied he.

The prince conferred apart with some of the counsellors and ministers of his deceased father, and they confirmed the statement of Fitz-Arthur. Prince Henry and the heir of Fitz-Arthur stood, the one by the bier of the Conqueror, the other beside the grave prepared to receive the corpse.

"If I promise thee satisfaction for the wrong thou hast sustained, Anselm Fitz-Arthur," said the prince, "may the obsequies of my royal father proceed? It was his dying request to be buried on this spot."

"Not till my right to the soil has been acknowledged, by the previous purchase of the grave, shall he, who wrongfully deprived me of my heritage, be laid therein," returned Fitz-Arthur.

"Name thy demand," said the prince.

"Sixty sols of silver," replied Fitz-Arthur.

Prince Henry ordered that the money should be forthwith collected and paid down; and the burial rites were then completed.

There was a happy meeting that night between Fitz-Arthur and his mother and sister, in the lowly shed that had sheltered those noble ladies in the

days of their adversity, so safely, that the storm of civil war, which had desolated many a princely castle in Normandy, had never approached their humble dwelling.

On the following day, Prince Henry of Normandy paid the heir of Fitz-Arthur a hundred pounds of silver, as the price of the land on which the abbey of St. Stephen stood, and restored to him the residue of the inheritance of his father, of which he had been wrongfully deprived by William the Conqueror. When the same Henry succeeded to the throne of England, under the title of Henry the First, surnamed Beauclerk, or "fine scholar," he made Anselm Fitz-Arthur a belted knight, and always treated him with great respect.

Thus Anselm Fitz-Arthur had the satisfaction, after having supported his mother and sister during their adversity, to restore them to their former high rank and station, and of causing his own name to be honourably inscribed in the annals of Normandy and England.

THE YOUNG INTERPRETER.

A TALE OF RICHARD CŒUR DE LION, AND THE CRUSADES.

CHAPTER I.

KING RICHARD THE FIRST DEPARTS FOR THE HOLY LAND.—SIR MILES DE METTINGHAM JOINS THE CRUSADERS.—ACCOMPANIED TO SICILY BY HIS LADY AND SON.—THE CRUSADERS SAIL FROM SICILY.—CONQUEST OF CYPRUS.—LADY DE METTINGHAM AND HER SON SAIL FOR ENGLAND.—ARE ABANDONED BY THE SHIP-MASTER.—HOSPITABLY ENTERTAINED BY A DALMATIAN MERCHANT.

OUR valiant King Richard the First, who is distinguished in history by the surname of Cœur de Lion, or the lion-hearted, was the second son of King Henry the Second, whom he succeeded in the year 1189. His eldest brother, Prince Henry, had died during his father's reign.

Soon after Richard the First ascended the throne, he made an alliance with Philip Augustus, King of France, and Leopold, Duke of Austria. These and other Christian princes agreed to go with him to the Holy Land, as Palestine was then called, to win the city of Jerusalem from the Saracens—a fierce and warlike nation of Mahometans, who were at that time governed by the mighty Sultan Saladin.

This expedition was called a *Crusade*, on account of the red-cross banner which was carried

THE YOUNG INTERPRETER.



Lady de Mettingham and the Scribe.



Blondel discovering Richard Cœur de Lion.

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100

before the Christian army. Each of the knights, nobles, and warriors, who went to fight in the Holy Land, had a red cross painted on his shield and banner; and various parts of their dress and equipments bore the same device.

A great deal of money was uselessly expended in these Crusades, and many valuable lives were lost. It was, however, deemed a very honourable thing to be a crusader, and, therefore, a great number of nobles, knights and squires, prepared themselves, with their vassals and serfs, to attend King Richard to the Holy Land. Among the rest was Sir Miles de Mettingham, who arrayed himself, his retainers, and his servants, in hauberks and steel caps, to join the king.

When all was ready for his departure, the lady and son of Sir Miles wept so sorely, and begged so hard to be permitted to accompany him, at least part of the way, that he consented to take them as far as Sicily. King Richard himself was going to that island, to deliver his sister, Queen Joanna, the widow of William, the good King of Sicily, from the power of the new king, Tancred, who, instead of paying her a dowry, which her late husband had left her, had unjustly shut her up in prison.

It was a good thing for Queen Joanna, that she had so valiant a brother as Richard Cœur de Lion. He soon compelled Tancred to release her from prison, and to pay her twenty thousand ounces of gold—which was a great deal more than her dowry came to. Richard, however, made him pay very dearly for his discourteous usage of this noble lady.

King Richard stayed six months in Sicily, where, as it was one of the most beautiful islands in the world, Sir Miles de Mettingham, his

lady, and his little boy, passed their time **very** pleasantly. Sir Miles recommended his son to avail himself of that opportunity of acquiring the language of the country.

One of the few good effects that resulted from the Crusades was, to introduce learning into England, together with the arts and sciences of the more polished countries through which the knights and nobles travelled. For when the English came to see how much the Italians, the Greeks, and even the Egyptians and Saracens, knew, they became ashamed of their own ignorance, and laboured to improve their minds.

"Wherever you are," would Sir Miles de Mettingham say to his son, "remember, something may be learned, and never omit an opportunity of acquiring knowledge. There are many situations in which money is of no use, but knowledge is at all times precious."

At length the time arrived for the king's departure with his army for the Holy Land.

Sir Miles de Mettingham took a tender leave of his lady and his son, whom he directed to return to England by the first vessel that was bound thither; and he sailed, with the rest of the English crusaders, and their royal leader, from Messina, on the 10th of April, 1191.

King Richard's fleet consisted of fifty-five galleys, and one hundred and fifty ships. They encountered stormy weather at first, and were dispersed and driven out of their course by contrary winds; but they all reached Palestine safely. On the way, King Richard conquered the island of Cyprus, and bound the king, Isaac Comnenus, in chains of silver, because he had uncourteously refused King Richard's betrothed bride, the Princess Berengaria of Navarre and

his sister Joanna, the Queen-Dowager of Sicily, permission to land and repose themselves after the storm.

While at Cyprus, King Richard married the Princess Berengaria: after which he proceeded to the Holy Land, where he joined the King of France, the Duke of Austria, and the other Christian princes who were allied with him in the crusade. He performed many valiant deeds, of which I shall tell you hereafter; but at present, I must return to Lady de Mettingham and her son, George, who were, you know, left in Sicily, when the brave crusaders sailed for the Holy Land with their lion-hearted king.

Both the mother and son felt very sad and lonely when they had parted with Sir Miles de Mettingham. Having no desire to remain in a foreign land without him, they embarked for England. In the ship with them was an aged bishop, who had accompanied King Richard to Sicily, but who, being unable to proceed with the rest of the expedition to the Holy Land, was about to return to his diocese in England.

Unfortunately for Lady de Mettingham and her son, the vessel encountered the same tempestuous weather which had so greatly inconvenienced the royal fleet; and the venerable bishop died of sea-sickness before they had been many hours on the voyage.

When the master of the vessel saw that the lady and her young son were deprived of their protector, he steered directly for a port in Dalmatia. There, pretending that the bark had received great damage during the late heavy gales, he persuaded her to go on shore, with her son, for a day or two, while the necessary repairs were being made to the ship. This, however,

proved to be but an artful excuse, for as they had paid him beforehand, his intention was to defraud them of their money, and to plunder their valuable baggage. The lady, who suspected not such villainy, was glad to land with her son, and to repose on shore for a few days, having suffered greatly from sea-sickness during the short time she had been on shipboard.

They landed on the little island of Zara, anciently called Jadira, on the coast of Dalmatia, in the Gulf of Venice. Here they were kindly received, and hospitably entertained at the house of one William de Stagno, a rich Styrian merchant, who had a fine house on the sea-shore, and was celebrated for his kindness to strangers.

The Lady de Mettingham and her son slept pleasantly enough that night in the comfortable beds which the merchant's wife had provided for them. But the next morning, when they looked for the ship, it was nowhere to be seen; and when they made inquiries about it of William de Stagno, he told them that it had sailed away in the night.

When they understood that they were left alone in a foreign land, almost without money, they wept and bewailed themselves exceedingly.

William de Stagno, however, who could speak Italian, (for which he had great occasion in his dealings with the Venetian merchants,) told them "not to lament, for they might think themselves very well off, that the wicked ship-master had not thrown them into the sea, instead of setting them on shore among good Christians." He bade them take comfort, and remain in his house for the present. An opportunity, he said, might perhaps occur of informing Sir Miles de Mettingham of their situation.

"Alas, kind sir! and how should that be?" said the lady, "since my husband hath gone with our valiant King Richard to the Holy Land, to fight the fierce Saracens."

"The Holy Land is not so far from the Gulf of Venice as you seem to think, noble lady," replied the merchant. "Pilgrims from Venice do oft go thither; and the voyage is short and pleasant; so that you may speedily have an opportunity of acquainting the brave Sir Miles de Mettingham of your present strait. Doubtless he will soon send you a supply of money wherewith to pursue your voyage to England. In the mean time, you may make yourself perfectly happy with me and my wife; and your fair young son can amuse himself, if he will, by learning German of me, and writing and accounts of my scribe, Luke. He speaketh Italian better than I do, and might soon learn German, which he will find very useful."

Now George de Mettingham, who was very fond of talking, and, having a fine memory, learned languages readily, had no dislike to the proposal of acquiring German. He had, however, no inclination to learn writing and arithmetic, though the worthy William de Stagno was always representing to him how useful the knowledge of them both would be to him.

George, I am sorry to say, was wont to reply pertly to the kind merchant's exhortations. "I like to learn languages, because I can then make people in foreign lands understand what I say. Writing and accounts are troublesome to acquire, and will be of little service to me. I mean to be a soldier and a knight, like my brave father, and our valiant King Richard; not a dull scribe, like your Luke."

"But knights and nobles, too, have great need of the art of writing, young sir," said the merchant; "and if I were not content to allow my dull scribe, Luke, as you please to call a wiser person than yourself, to write a letter from your lady mother and yourself, to the knight, your father, how do you think he would ever learn the strait in which ye are both placed?"

"The same messenger whom you will employ to convey the letter, could tell my father the same by word of mouth," replied George.

"Nay, then, if you think that a verbal message would answer the same purpose, young sir," observed De Stagno, "my Luke may be spared the trouble of writing upon vellum a letter, detailing all that hath befallen ye both since he sailed from Messina, and praying for his directions and aid in reaching England."

"Alack, my worthy host," said Lady de Mettingham, "I pray you give no heed to the idle babbling of my foolish boy, who is willing to defend his own ignorance, rather than to take the trouble of acquiring that clerkly skill which would, at present, stand us in such good stead. In writing both to Sir Miles de Mettingham, and to our friends in England, being unable to do it ourselves, we are fain to trouble your learned scribe, master Luke, whom, as well as yourself, I will requite, when I receive a supply of crowns from the knight, my husband."

William de Stagno begged the Lady not to make herself uneasy on that account. "Both my scribe and myself," said he, "are willing to render any service or courtesy to the wife and son of a valiant crusader, without looking for reward. Nevertheless," continued he, "there be some among the inhabitants of this town, who will do

naught for foreign strangers unless they be paid beforehand. It is well, therefore, for those who require letters to be written, if they can play the scribe for themselves; otherwise they must be content to send verbal messages to their friends, by those who will undertake to carry them for nothing."

Having given this significant hint to George, the merchant called his scribe, Luke, to attend the Lady de Mettingham, and to write, from her dictation, letters to whomsoever she pleased

CHAPTER II.

A LETTER DESPATCHED TO SIR MILES DE METTINGHAM.—HE RECEIVES AND ANSWERS IT.—THE ANSWER MISCARRIES.—DISTRESS OF THE LADY AND HER SON.—DISUNION AMONG THE CRUSADERS.—KING RICHARD DESERTED BY HIS ALLIES.—TREACHERY OF PRINCE JOHN.—A STORM AND SHIPWRECK.

THE scribe, Luke, now brought a fair sheet of vellum, on which, in those days, letters were written, and penned a long letter to Sir Miles de Mettingham, from the lady's dictation, informing him of the base conduct of the master of the vessel; of the wickedness of her servants, in confederating with him to abandon her in a foreign land; and telling him where she and her son then were. She also told him of the kindness of William de Stagno and his wife, requesting him to send her a supply of money, with directions how she should proceed to England; and concluded with many loving messages to him, both from herself and George, and praying him to have a care of his

safety, and not to expose himself rashly in battle.

To this letter, the Lady de Mettingham, not being able to write, which few lords, much less ladies, could do in those days of ignorance, set her mark, which was witnessed by William de Stagno, and his scribe. She then rolled the letter into a round scroll, which was then the fashion, instead of folding it flat as we do now; fastened it with a skein of floise silk; sealed it with her own seal, which she wore about her neck; and caused to be superscribed, that is to say, directed, as follows:

"To the hands of the valiant knight, Sir Miles de Mettingham; a crusader fighting in Palestine, under the banner of the puissant lord, Richard Cœur de Lion, King of England, lord of Ireland, and Duke of Normandy and Aquitaine, whom may God prosper and defend. Amen."

It was not long before an opportunity of sending the letter occurred. A Venetian knight was about to set out on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, to join the allied Christian princes, who were then besieging the city of Acre; and he kindly took charge of the letter, which, in due time, he delivered to the English knight.

When Sir Miles de Mettingham had read his lady's letter, he was greatly concerned to find she was without money in a foreign land. So he wrote a very affectionate reply to her letter, and sent her fifty crowns, which was all the money he could spare. He recommended her to return to England as soon as William de Stagno could meet with a ship bound to the port of London, or to Yarmouth, with some worthy merchant on board, who would be willing to take her and her son under his care; and this he doubted not would soon be the case, as Venice was then in the height

of its prosperity, and carried on a great trade with England.

This letter Sir Miles intrusted to a travelling Venetian merchant, who had been to Palestine to buy spices and ebony, and cedar-wood from Mount Lebanon, in exchange for armour and wearing apparel, and many other things which the armies required. Unluckily it happened that the merchant and his servants encountered a party of Arabs of the desert, who plundered and carried them away into Egypt, where they sold them for slaves. Poor Lady de Mettingham, therefore, got neither her husband's letter, nor the crowns which he had sent for her.

Day after day, and month after month, passed away, and she heard no news of her husband, though merchants and palmers, returning from Jerusalem, brought tidings that the allied Christian princes were everywhere successful in their strife with the Infidels in the Holy Land.

They heard that Acre had been taken by the Crusaders, and how greatly the King of England had distinguished himself above his royal companions in that exploit. They heard also of the fall of Joppa and of Ascalon. In fact, King Richard's wonderful achievements in this perilous warfare with the Saracens, not only resounded from the East to the West, but were sung by the minstrels and Provençal poets throughout Europe, to the sound of the harp.

The lady and son of the absent Sir Miles de Mettingham were proud of hearing of the glory of their valiant sovereign, and of the success of the Christian cause in the East. They would, of course, have rejoiced far more, could they have been assured of the safety of Sir Miles, and that he had received their letter.

At length, reports began to reach Europe of the sufferings and hardships to which the crusading armies were exposed. Accounts of sickness and mortality among them were also heard; and Lady de Mettingham and her son were filled with anxious alarm, lest the silence of Sir Miles should have been caused by sickness or death.

"I wish," said George, one day, to his mother, "that I might be permitted to join the next company of pilgrims that proceed from Venice to the Holy Land; I should then be able to obtain for you, certain information respecting my dear father. It is now more than a twelvemonth since he parted from us at Messina, and we have yet heard no tidings from him."

"Shall we not go together, my boy?" said the lady, tenderly embracing her son; "for what should I do, alone, in a land of strangers?"

When they communicated their project to William de Stagno, he shook his head, and told them that it would be very difficult to put their design in execution. "The last news," said he, "that has been received from the Holy Land, is of an unfavourable character. The Christian princes are quarrelling among themselves. The King of France is jealous of the superior fame which Richard of England hath acquired; and the Duke of Austria is doing everything in his power to increase the differences between these two great sovereigns."

"And wherefore should the Duke of Austria act so evil a part?" asked the lady.

"Because," replied De Stagno, "King Richard hath offended him. When the Duke had planted his banner on the highest tower of Acre, Richard caused it to be taken down, and the royal standard of England to be fixed in its place; for though

the Duke of Austria did assist in taking that city, it was Richard's resistless valour that finally won the town. Nevertheless, King Richard would have acted more prudently, if he had contented himself with the consciousness of having done more for the Christian cause than either of his allies, without exalting himself too much above them; whereby he hath made deadly enemies of those who might have been valuable friends. Moreover, I hear that the King of France hath withdrawn himself from the alliance, and is about to return home, with the remains of his once mighty army. Therefore, dear lady, I would have you remain quietly in my house, till you hear what news shall be brought from the Holy Land, by the return of the French crusaders."

The next news that Lady de Mettingham heard of the Crusaders was, the return of the King of France and his army from the Holy Land. They arrived in Europe at the latter end of the year 1191. They were followed by the Duke of Austria, and all the German crusaders; and the King of England was left to maintain the war against the Infidels with no other force than his own diminished army.

Notwithstanding these disadvantages, the mighty deeds of King Richard had rendered him the terror of the Saracens, and there is little doubt but he would soon have entered Jerusalem in triumph, had it not been for the treachery of his ungrateful brother John. Instead of continuing to send him supplies of arms and money from England, John wickedly incited the people to rebel against him, and plotted to usurp the crown in his absence. The King of France, not contented with having deserted the Christian cause in Palestine, did all in his power to aid

Prince John in his base attempts to supplant Richard in England.

When the lady heard these tidings, she knew it would be very dangerous to return to her own country; and William de Stagno earnestly entreated her to remain quietly where she was. It was generally believed that King Richard, with the residue of his army, would very soon quit the Holy Land, on account of the troubles in England; and in that event, De Stagno thought that Sir Miles would either come to Zara, or appoint his lady and son to join him at Venice, or some other Italian port.

Lady de Mettingham consoled herself with this hope, which soon appeared to wear the semblance of probability. Richard's queen, Berengaria, Joanna, his sister, and a considerable number of his knights and nobles, had already sailed for Europe, with a prosperous wind, and therefore it was not supposed that the king would remain long behind.

The Lady de Mettingham, with her son, now watched, day after day, for those vessels whose red-crossed sails showed that they were bringing home some of the brave crusaders from the Holy Land. At length, a succession of tempestuous days and stormy nights set in, and the rude winds and drenching rains drove the lady from her rocky seat on the sea-shore; but George would, from time to time, visit the beach. One day he rushed into the house with wet garments and dripping hair, and catching his mother's hand, exclaimed,—“Mother, there is a galliot, with a red-cross flag, tossing in the gulf. The fishers tell me she has been vainly endeavouring to make the port of Venice, and is in great danger of com-

ing ashore here. Perhaps that vessel may contain my father."

The lady hastened to the beach at these words, regardless of the beating rain and stormy blast which drifted the salt spray in her face. George and De Stagno followed her, just in time to see the gallant vessel, now dismantled of sails and pennons, labouring among the raging billows, and making signals of distress in vain. At length she split upon a rock, and her disjointed timbers were scattered to the mercy of the winds and waves.

CHAPTER III.

KING RICHARD AND SIR MILES DE METTINGHAM SAVED FROM THE WRECK BY DE STAGNO.—PERILOUS SITUATION OF THE KING.—GEORGE DE METTINGHAM OFFERS TO ACCOMPANY HIM.—HE IS SENT TO ZARA.—SUCCESS OF HIS MISSION.—THE PARTY DETAINED AT GORITZ.—EFFORT OF DE METTINGHAM TO SAVE THE KING.—GEORGE ESCAPES WITH KING RICHARD.

WILLIAM DE STAGNO offered prompt assistance to the unfortunate strangers, by sending out to them a sagacious water-dog, with a rope; by which means nine of the party were preserved. Among them was one of loftier stature and nobler bearing than his companions, who, as soon as they could speak, surrounded him with every appearance of satisfaction at his having been among the number of those who had been so fortunate as to escape.

"Nay, marry, my loving lieges," replied he, shaking the salt water from his bright ringlets as he spoke, "many a better man than myself has, I fear, found a watery grave this day. So immi-

ment, indeed, has been my own danger, that my escape reminds me of the audacious saying of my scapegrace predecessor, William the Red, who, when warned by the cautious pilot not to venture a voyage to Normandy in stormy weather, replied, 'Tush, man, didst thou ever hear of a King of England being drowned?' "

"It is my royal lord, King Richard!" exclaimed Lady de Mettingham. "Is my dear husband with him?"

"What, ho, Sir Miles de Mettingham," cried the king, "are you in the land of the living?"

The next moment that gallant crusader was enfolded in the embrace of his wife and son.

"St. George to speed!" cried the king, "but I also should be glad to receive so warm a welcome, after the cold sea-bath that I have been compelled to take."

"Your grace is not likely to receive very loving greetings on this coast," said William de Stagno; "for you have landed in a country where every one is vowed to pursue your life."

"Indeed!" replied King Richard; "I was not aware that I had given any cause of offence to the Dalmatians."

"Not to the Dalmatians in particular, but to the knights and princes of Germany, my lord," said De Stagno; "and, above all, to Leopold, Duke of Austria, whom you made your mortal foe at Acre, and at Ascalon."

"What then?" replied King Richard; "I am not in his dominions, and, therefore, have no cause to fear his enmity."

"Has your grace forgotten the intimate bonds of union which connect the German princes together?" said De Stagno. "They are divided, and yet they are a whole. Touch one, and all

will attack you. You are now in the dominions of the King of Hungary."

"Then," said the king, "I suppose I and my brave companions shall be denied food and shelter, if we venture to set foot within any cell of the wasp's nest."

"Your grace shall receive everything that your need requires, if you will condescend to enter the humble dwelling of a Styrian merchant," said De Stagno.

Richard was very glad to avail himself of the friendly invitation of the generous trader, who received and entertained the wet and weary monarch and his followers. They all rested beneath his hospitable roof, till they had sufficiently recovered from their fatigues to proceed on their perilous journey.

From De Stagno, King Richard learned that his queen and his sister, with the fleet that accompanied them from Ptolemais, had safely reached England some weeks before. It was with the intention of joining them, supposing that they had landed in Sicily, that Richard had entered these latitudes; and, meeting with a storm, his vessel had been separated from the rest of the fleet, and driven upon the coast of Dalmatia.

The ship having gone to pieces, and none other approaching the little isle on which the king and his surviving companions had found refuge, it became a matter of serious consideration how he should pursue his journey to England.

"I will gain my continental dominions of Normandy or Aquitaine, by traversing Germany in the dress of a pilgrim from the Holy Land," said the king.

"But your grace does not understand a word

of German, and your Anglo-Norman speech will betray you," said De Stagno.

"I have learned German!" exclaimed George de Mettingham with great vivacity. "I can speak both the Sclavonic and Teutonic dialects, that are used in these parts. I will attend our noble king as his page and interpreter, if he will deign to accept my poor services."

"Well said, my brave boy," returned the king, clapping him on the shoulder; "I desire no better squire for the adventure. Thou shalt be purse-bearer, purveyor, and interpreter, during the journey."

"I fear your grace confides too much in the qualifications of my simple boy," said Sir Miles de Mettingham, "considering his tender age and inexperience. Moreover, I warn you that he is rash of speech, and too apt to boast."

"Not now, my loving father, under favour be it spoken," said George; "I have altered of late greatly for the better, as my lady mother can bear me witness. I have learned languages of Master De Stagno, thrift of his good wife, and discretion of Luke the scribe; valour and wit I had before. I trust I am now sufficiently accomplished in all things requisite to serve my lord the king, at his need."

"Have naught to do with him, my royal lord," exclaimed Sir Miles de Mettingham; "he soundeth his own praise too loudly to be trusted in matters where prudence and reflection are requisite. One would think, by his vain prating, that the boy had been dwelling in Gascony. I fear his mother hath spoiled him rarely in my absence."

But the king, who was something of a boaster himself, and was amused by the vivacious humour

of the lad, declared that he liked his spirit. So he forthwith took him into his service, notwithstanding the warning of Sir Miles.

"Knowest thou the road to the town of Zara, my pretty page?" said the king.

"Ay, my dread lord, as well as thou knowest the way from the village of Charing to the royal city of Westminster," replied George.

"Then," said the king, drawing a ruby ring, of inestimable value, from his finger, "go to Sir Herman Steinbach, the governor, and tell him, Hugh the merchant sends him this ring to purchase his friendship and free passage for nine pilgrims from the Holy Land into Carinthia; and return speedily to me with his answer."

"I pray thee, let me go with the boy, my liege, lest evil should befall from sending so precious a jewel by no safer convoy," cried Sir Miles de Mettingham, starting forward.

"Tut!" said the king, "who will suspect a boy of his appearance of being a king's ambassador, and the bearer of royal gifts? But perchance, Sir Miles, you fear for the safety of your only son?"

"Thou shalt do with the boy as thou wilt, my royal lord," replied Sir Miles, "so that thou endanger not thine own person by employing ambassadors of no greater discretion than my son George."

When George de Mettingham entered the presence of the governor of Zara, and, having delivered King Richard's message, presented him with the ring, Sir Herman de Steinbach, who was a judge of gems, replied in these memorable words:

"Not Hugh the merchant, but Richard the king, sends me this jewel. There is no subject so magnificent, no monarch so generous, as to offer

such gifts, but the lion-hearted King of England. Return to him and tell him, he and his train are free to pass the bridge which divides Zara from the continent of Dalmatia; but bid him beware of Ulrick, the Lord of Carinthia, who has vowed his death."

George returned with all speed to his royal master, and was so proud of having performed his important commission with such signal success, that he could not forbear boasting of it to his father.

"Presume not on thy present good luck, young man," said Sir Miles; "the tide ebbs as surely as it flows, and those vessels that carry more sail than ballast, are most likely to be wrecked."

That evening William de Stagno having provided the whole party with gowns of gray serge, such as were worn by pilgrims from the Holy Land, they all set off from his hospitable door, himself making one of the party, in quality of guide. Lady de Mettingham was left in care of his good wife at home; for all agreed, that ladies were not required in so perilous an undertaking as crossing a hostile country on foot.

The first misfortune that befell them was at Goritz; where Mainhard, the petty chief of that country, suspecting that they were persons of high rank in disguise, stopped them as they were about to pass through the last gate, and demanded who they were.

"We are pilgrims from the Holy Land," said Sir Miles de Mettingham; "and I pray you, for the sake of blessed charity, to let us pass; for our home is in a far country."

"Ye are English crusaders," replied the fierce Mainhard. "Your king insulted a prince of the German empire; and, as all the German powers

are as one, ye shall dearly rue his arrogance to Leopold of Austria."

"Nay," said William de Stagno, "we are not *all* English, and thou wouldst not surely injure German pilgrims; nor yet, I should hope, those English crusaders who travel with the free pass of the governor of Zara."

"I am a count of the German Empire," said Mainhard, "and care nothing for Herman of Zara's pass. He has no authority in Goritz, and I have sworn to the Duke of Austria to detain all English crusaders who enter my territories, till I have clutched his foe, Richard of England, whom we have reason to believe was wrecked a few days ago on the coast of Dalmatia."

"Then," said Sir Miles de Mettingham, "if I give you certain intelligence where King Richard now is, will you allow us to pass?"

"Yes, if you tell me that he is one of this company," said Mainhard.

"He is," replied Sir Miles.

There was a general burst of indignation from the rest of the pilgrims at this avowal.

"Point him out," said Mainhard.

"Behold him!" cried the brave Mettingham, throwing off his pilgrim's weeds, and drawing up his tall figure to its full height; "I am Richard of England, and now let my comrades pass."

"Ay," replied Mainhard, "I desire not the honour of entertaining any of thy nation but thyself."

When George saw his beloved father deliver himself up a captive in the place of his royal master, he was torn with contending feelings—of love to his parent, and loyalty to his prince, and undecided whether to tarry with his father,

or to proceed with the king. A look from his father enjoined him to follow the other pilgrims, which he did with a sorrowful heart and tearful eyes; for he thought of his mother's anguish, when she should hear that his father was a prisoner in the hands of the lawless Mainhard of Goritz.

Soon after they had quitted the town, two horsemen approached, who were known to William de Stagno; and he immediately purchased their horses, which were fleet and good. Mounting one himself, he requested the king to take the other; "for," said he, "you will have need to travel with all speed, since Mainhard of Goritz will not be long in detecting your counterfeit majesty, Sir Miles de Mettingham, and we shall have him at our heels presently."

All the king's followers begged him to mount. There was no time for ceremony; so the king sprang upon the horse, and taking George behind him, rode off as hard as he could gallop after William de Stagno, who led the way.

CHAPTER IV.

KING RICHARD GETS INTO THE TERRITORY OF THE DUKE OF AUSTRIA.—GEORGE GOES TO VIENNA TO PURCHASE NECESSARIES, AND EXCITES SUSPICION.—THE KING FALLS ILL OF A FEVER.—GEORGE SUSPECTED OF BEING A THIEF.—THE KING DISCOVERED.—GEORGE MEETS WITH BLONDEL, WHO CONVEYS TO ENGLAND AN ACCOUNT OF THE KING'S CAPTIVITY.—THE KING RANSOMED, AND RETURNS TO ENGLAND.—SIR MILES DE METTINGHAM, HIS LADY, AND HIS SON, RESTORED TO EACH OTHER.

THINGS fell out just as De Stagno apprehended. There was a crusader in the town of Goritz, to whom the person of King Richard

was well known, and when he saw Sir Miles de Mettingham, he proclaimed the imposture. Mainhard sent forthwith, and pursued the pilgrims, and captured the whole party, except the king, William de Stagno, and George.

They, meantime, not daring to pause even to look behind them, pursued their way with breathless haste towards Saltzburgh; it being the king's intention to gain the shores of the Rhine, and so to proceed, by way of Dusseldorf and Coblentz, homewards. But having received the friendly warning from the Governor of Zara, to beware of Ulrick of Carinthia, he ventured not to enter that country, through which his direct road lay.

William de Stagno, who was familiar with the face of the country, had engaged to guide the royal fugitive by a safe circuitous route; but being unaccustomed to hard riding, he met with a severe fall from his horse, near Friesach, and was so much injured as to be unable to go on. As this happened on the Carinthian frontier, the king was compelled to proceed without him, for fear of Ulrick, the lord of that place.

King Richard was a mighty warrior, but a very poor geographer; and, misunderstanding the directions of William de Stagno, he presently lost his way, and wandered with his young companion from one place of danger to another, till he unluckily got into the dominions of his mortal foe, the Duke of Austria. At last he fell sick of a fever at the village of Erperg, in the immediate vicinity of the great city of Vienna, the capital of the Austrian dominions.

George, who was now King Richard's sole attendant, had lost his gay spirits ever since he had seen his dear father detained a prisoner in his sovereign's place, by the ruffian Mainhard of

Goritz. He had felt dissatisfied with the king for permitting the counterfeit to pass without declaring himself; and when William de Stagno was also abandoned by King Richard at Friesach, after his accident, he had even ventured to expostulate with his royal master on the subject. But the king told him "that neither his father, William de Stagno, nor any of his followers, were in danger, he alone being the object of the Duke of Austria's pursuit." But when the king soon after fell sick at Erperg, poor George was filled with the most anxious apprehensions as to what would be the result of this perilous adventure, alone with his sovereign in a land of hostile strangers.

They had taken up their abode in a deserted mansion, belonging to an absent crusader; and George exerted all his skill and industry to make things a little comfortable for the sick monarch. They had neither food nor bedding, so George proceeded to Vienna, to purchase those necessities for his royal master.

He there found his boasted knowledge of the German language, however, very superficial, and had great difficulty in making himself understood in Vienna, where German is spoken with a purity unknown to the inhabitants of the provinces of the empire. His appearance, dress and manners, were such as to excite attention and curiosity in the shops, where he presently emptied King Richard's slenderly-stocked purse in purchasing articles suitable to the rank, rather than to the present fortunes, of his disguised sovereign.

Sheets of the finest Holland linen, ready made; a down coverlid, towels of damask, scented waters; Tokay wine, which is only drank by kings and princes; manchets, or rolls, of the finest wheat

flour; and a variety of the most delicate fruits and cakes that could be procured in all Vienna.

"And for whom are you purchasing these costly articles, young sir?" asked the merchant where George made choice of the bedding.

"For one who has need of them," replied George.

"That must be her Serene Highness the Duchess of Austria, then," said the merchant; "I suppose you are her page."

"No, indeed," returned George angrily; "I would not condescend to wait on the wife of Leopold of Austria."

"Then belike you are in the service of the Empress of Germany," said the man.

"I am in the service of one who can afford to pay for what he orders," said George, flinging down a handful of gold besants on the counter.

"These are Syrian pieces," said the merchant; "do you come from the Holy Land?"

"My master is a rich Syrian merchant," replied George, who began to grow uneasy at the merchant's observations. "He is sick of a bad fever, and requires delicate linen and bedding."

"Do you come from the ducal palace?" demanded the vintner, when George asked for Tokay. "None but royal lips taste this costly beverage," continued he, when George replied in the negative.

"My master is sick, and requires this wine," said George: "I have wherewithal to pay for it; therefore it matters not to a trader like you who drinketh the wine of Tokay."

"You are a foreigner by your speech," said the vintner; "pray, from what country do you come?"

"From a country where tradesmen serve their

customers without asking impertinent questions," replied George, angrily.

Not choosing to discover King Richard's asylum, by allowing the traders to send their porters with the goods, as they obligingly proposed, George expended the last piece of gold in his royal master's purse, in the purchase of a mule with a capacious pair of panniers: in these he stowed all the articles he had bought in Vienna, and rode back to Erperg.

It would have been well for George, had he availed himself of the opportunity of learning the mysteries of arithmetic, and the useful art of writing, while he spent so many idle months in the house of William de Stagno; for the tradesmen of Vienna took advantage of his ignorance, to cheat him of a part of the change of every besant he laid out that day.

King Richard continued ill for many days, but refused to summon a physician, lest he should be discovered. George, in the mean time, being unable to write, could send no information to Queen Berengaria, or the king's mother, as to the situation of his royal master.

When the king began to amend, his appetite returned, and he desired George to go and purchase some fresh provisions in the market at Vienna. Having expended all the money in the king's purse, and having none of his own, George took with him one of the king's jewelled gauntlets, and offered to sell it for a golden sol, at an armourer's stall in the market. No sooner did the armourer set eyes upon the gauntlet, than he was aware that it must belong to a person of very high rank; so, seizing George by the collar, he said, "Ah, thou naughty varlet, thou hast stolen thy lord's gauntlet. But as I am an honest man,

and have no dealings with thieves, thou shalt go before the judge, to give account how it came into thy possession."

"Indeed," replied George, earnestly, "I am no thief, but the son of Sir Miles de Mettingham, whom one of your wicked countrymen hath imprisoned in the fortress of Goritz."

"Dost thou pretend that this gauntlet, which hath a royal bracelet round the wrist, belongeth to a simple knight?" exclaimed a person who had brought a piece of armour to be repaired. "This glove belongeth to the King of England; I saw it on his hand after the storming of Acre, at the very time he insulted our Duke."

Immediately a general clamour arose in the market-place. Poor George was hurried before the Duke of Austria, who fiercely demanded of him where King Richard was.

George at first affected not to understand German; but the armourer, and those with whom he had previously dealt, bore witness that he had conversed with them in that language. On his refusing to betray the place of his royal master's retreat, the Duke of Austria ordered him to be put to the torture, till the extremity of his sufferings compelled him to reveal King Richard's hiding-place.

King Richard had just fallen into a sound sleep, when the guards of the Duke of Austria rudely entered his chamber and seized him. He was first conveyed to the Castle of Thierstein, and strictly guarded by an Austrian nobleman: but the emperor, Henry the Sixth, a most base and dishonourable prince, when he heard of the arrest of the illustrious fugitive, instead of using his power for his deliverance from his unjust captivity, said:

"No duke must presume to imprison a king. It belongs to an emperor to do that." So he took the royal captive into his own possession, and imprisoned him in the Castle of Trifels, in his own dominions.

This iniquity was, however, so secretly transacted between the Emperor and his vassal, the Duke of Austria, that no one but those who were employed by them to guard King Richard, knew what had become of him, or where he was.

You may suppose how deeply George de Mettingham was afflicted at having been the cause of his royal master's capture. He had been far from intending to do him any injury, yet his imprudence had occasioned the greatest misfortune that could have befallen him; namely, that of betraying him into the hands of his bitterest foe, the Duke of Austria.

George had endured the torture with great courage at first, and now he felt that he ought rather to have died than procured relief for his own sufferings by revealing the king's retreat to his foes.

However, George loved his royal master very sincerely, and resolved to do all he could to repair the mischief he had done, by searching out some of his friends, and informing them of what had befallen him. So, as soon as he was able to travel, he set out from Vienna, intending to beg his way across the country he had previously traversed, back to Friesach, where he had left William de Stagno. On the way he fortunately encountered a troubadour, or wandering minstrel, who was singing a Provençal ballad, which appeared familiar to his ear.

"I have heard that song before," said he, as soon as the minstrel had ceased.

"That ballad was composed by myself," said the troubadour; "and there is only one person besides who knoweth it."

"That person was Richard, King of England, then," said the boy, "for I have often heard him sing it."

"What knowest thou of King Richard, my royal master?" demanded the minstrel, eagerly.

"First tell me who thou art," replied George.

"I am Blondel, his friend and favourite minstrel," returned the troubadour; "and I have made a vow to travel the whole world over in search of my dear sovereign. Now tell me all thou knowest of him."

George then, with many tears, related to the faithful Blondel all that had befallen King Richard since his shipwreck on the coast of Dalmatia concluding with his imprisonment in the Castle of Thierstein. But he knew not of the place to which the Emperor had caused him to be removed.

"No doubt," said Blondel, "we shall be able to discover that, if you are willing to accompany me in the quality of an interpreter; for I do not understand the barbarous German language."

George readily promised his attendance and assistance to Blondel in the search; and, by making cautious inquiries in the neighbourhood of Thierstein, soon ascertained that the royal captive had been removed into the Tyrol.

Thither Blondel, accompanied by George, bent his steps; and, according to the custom of wandering minstrels in those days, tuned his lute, and sang under the walls of every castle he approached.

At every castle he received courteous entertainment; at most of them liberal gifts; and at

all of them George took the opportunity of obtaining what intelligence he could of King Richard, while Blondel was playing and singing. At last they came beneath the walls of Trifels; and when Blondel began, as usual, to sing and play the Provençal ballad, which was known only to himself and his royal master, and had concluded the first verse, a well-known voice from above was heard to continue the song.

It was the voice of Richard Cœur de Lion, for he was captive in that castle.

You may imagine the joy of Blondel and George at having discovered where he was. Blondel, still accompanying his voice with the lute, sang to his royal master an account of everything that had taken place in England, and how his brother, Prince John, had taken advantage of his absence to usurp the sovereign power. King Richard, in reply, sang some verses requesting Blondel to tell his mother and his wife where he was, and to beg them to appeal to the pope (who had absolute power over all the princes in Europe) to obtain his deliverance from the emperor and the Duke of Austria.

Then Blondel went over to England, and performed the king's bidding with all haste. He left George in the Tyrol, to watch if the king were removed from Trifels. He was soon taken to Hagenau, where the emperor had the presumption to bring him to a trial, under false accusations, which were only a pretext to extort a large sum of money from him by way of a ransom.

Queen Eleanor, meantime, applied to the pope, on her royal son's behalf, but in vain; for he was bribed by the King of France and Prince John, who wished to keep the valiant Richard in a foreign prison. So she was compelled to pay the

emperor one hundred thousand silver marks for the ransom of her son, and to give hostages for fifty thousand more, to be paid to the Duke of Austria.

It was with great difficulty that so large a sum could be raised in the impoverished kingdom of England ; but everybody contributed something towards it, and the King of Scotland generously contributed two thousand marks, to help make up the payment.

Richard returned to England on the 13th of May, 1194, eighteen months after his departure from Acre. Prince John, who was a great coward, then laid down his arms, and humbly besought his royal brother's pardon for his late rebellion.

"I forgive you," said the generous Richard ; "and hope I shall forget your offence as soon as you will my pardon."

King Richard readily excused his young interpreter, George de Mettingham, for having unwittingly been the means of betraying him into the hands of his foes. Having procured the release of Sir Miles de Mettingham from the hands of Mainhard of Goritz, he had the pleasure of witnessing a very tender meeting between him, his son, and his lady, whom William de Stagno, on his recovery, had brought over to England. The king bestowed many marks of his favour on the worthy merchant, whom he knighted, and ever after retained in his service. As for the Duke of Austria, he died before the fifty thousand marks, which were to have been his share of King Richard's ransom, were paid ; so he gained nothing but infamy, and the contempt of all posterity, for his base conduct to the valiant Richard Cœur de Lion.

THE LORD OF BRAMBER.

A TALE OF THE TIMES OF KING JOHN.

CHAPTER I.

AN ENGLISH CASTLE IN THE DAYS OF KING JOHN.—HIS WICKED CONDUCT.—EXCOMMUNICATED BY THE POPE.—ENGLAND PLACED UNDER AN INTERDICT.—POPISH POLICY.—KING JOHN DEMANDS THE CHILDREN OF THE LORD OF BRAMBER.—HIS DEMAND RESISTED.

IN the reign of King John, who succeeded to the throne of England in the year 1199, there lived a mighty baron, named William de Bruis. He was the lord of forty manors, and resided in great state and splendour at Bramber, or Bramborough Castle, in Sussex.

The ruins of this castle are still in existence, they are situated near the little village from which the castle derives its name, on a lofty mound, above the river Adur, about forty-five miles from London. The castle was once a place of strength and importance; but time has decayed its massive walls, and rent the gray arches, which are now mantled with green ivy, and fast crumbling away. In a very few years, in all probability, no traces will remain of this once stately abode of baronial power and grandeur.

In the days of King John, when William de Bruis was lord of the Honour of Bramber, as this

THE LORD OF BRAMBER.



Sir Peter Mauluc demanding the Children.



Prince Arthur awakened by his Jailer.

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feudal domain was called, the now ruinous castle was full of noble apartments, all richly furnished. They were hung, too, with tapestry, which, in those days, was worked by the ladies of the family, and their maids, who used to sit together in one large apartment, and relate tales, or sing songs, in turn, to entertain themselves during their labours.

William de Bruis had five children; three boys and two girls. Reginald, his heir, who was some years older than the rest, lived at a fine castle in Ireland, of which his father had made him the lord, in the hope of his civilizing and winning the affections of the wild Irish *kernes*, his vassals. This Irish estate had been given to the baron by King Henry the Second, in whose reign Ireland was conquered. The second son of the Lord of Bramber was named William; the two daughters were named Blanche and Jane; and the infant boy was called Hugh.

These children were all much attached to each other, as well as to their parents. They lived in so much pomp and grandeur, that many of their poor neighbours were disposed, in the blindness of their hearts, to repine at the unequal distribution of earthly happiness which had been allotted to the fortunate family of De Bruis. But, alas, how ignorant are people of the perilous nature of those very things which they sometimes covet! From the calamities of the great and affluent, the poor and destitute may learn lessons of contentment, and of submission to a lowly lot in life.

The wealth, the popularity, even the virtues of the Lord of Bramber, had excited the jealous hatred of King John, his worthless sovereign, who only waited for an opportunity to effect the ruin of De Bruis

I believe historians have agreed, that of all the kings of England, John was the worst. He was cowardly, treacherous, and cruel. He had been an undutiful son, an ungrateful brother, and a disloyal subject. Of course, when the regal power fell into his hands, he proved a bad sovereign; for those who know not how to obey, are never fit to command. He was not lawfully King of England, for, on the death of his brother Geoffrey, he usurped the throne, to the exclusion of that brother's children, Arthur and Eleanor, of Brittany, of whom I shall tell you more hereafter.

After rendering himself despised by all the princes of Christendom, and detested by his own subjects, he quarrelled with the Pope, who, in the year 1208, excommunicated him. By this act, John was declared an outcast from the Church of Rome, and the kingdom of England was placed under an interdict; that is, the Pope forbade that public worship should be performed in the churches, that marriages should be celebrated, funerals solemnized, or baptisms administered, throughout the realm.

Now, the Pope, who was always labouring to acquire absolute sway over the sovereigns of Europe, did this, not so much out of abhorrence of John's crimes, as from a design of terrifying him into absolute and slavish submission to his authority. At first, John cared little for the Pope's displeasure; but he was much disturbed at the effect which the interdict naturally produced on the minds of his subjects. This being the age of superstition and bigotry, the common people were greatly troubled at the papal wrath, and were so ignorant as to apprehend that some dreadful calamity would befall the nation in consequence. They were, indeed, ready to take up arms against

the sovereign who had been the means of drawing such a misfortune upon them.

The nobles were not quite so ignorant. They knew that the Pope had no real power of injuring either the king or the people of England, by any decree that he might think proper to publish at Rome, or elsewhere. But they had themselves long been indignant at John's base and oppressive conduct, and they deemed this a good opportunity of compelling him to amend his corrupt government, and to moderate his illegal exercise of the royal power.

The Lord of Bramber was one of the confederate barons who, on this occasion, took an active part in the endeavour to obtain a redress of public grievances, and a better administration of the laws. But King John got together a military force, in defence of his arbitrary proceedings. He seized on several of the nobles who opposed him, and put them into prison, where he loaded them with fetters and treated them with great barbarity.

If the nobles could have agreed among themselves, they might soon have brought the king to grant their demands. Eight years afterwards, indeed, they did so, by compelling him to sign the great Charter at Runnymede, whereby the liberty of the subject was so gloriously secured. But they quarrelled one with another, and such divisions and jealousies arose among them, that the king took advantage of their strife to defeat their plans.

King John would fain have seized the person of the Lord of Bramber, against whom he cherished a deep and deadly hatred; but he knew the popularity of De Bruis was so great that all Sussex would be in arms, to revenge any outrage that should be offered to him. So he contented

himself with sending his wicked equerry, Sir Peter Mauluc, who had assisted in the murder of Prince Arthur, to demand him to give up his children as hostages for his good behaviour.

De Bruis, his lady, and their children, were sitting together in the hall, having just dined, for it was the hour of noon, when Gilbert Leigh, one of his esquires, announced that an armed messenger from the king, attended by a military escort demanded admittance to his presence.

"Know you who the messenger is?"

"My lord, his herald announced him as Sir Peter Mauluc," replied the squire.

"Sir Peter Mauluc!" exclaimed De Bruis, indignantly. "Doth King John think that the Lord of Bramber will admit to his presence a villain whose hands are stained with the blood of our rightful sovereign, Arthur of Brittany? Go tell him, Gilbert Leigh, that I will not hold par-lance with him."

"Doth my lord consider the consequence of sending such a message to him who cometh in the king's name?" said Gilbert Leigh.

"When King John sendeth a proper messenger, I will treat him with all due courtesy; but Peter Mauluc is a murderer."

"Yet," said the Lady de Bruis, "it will be as well to hear what message he bringeth from the king. I wot, King John would find some trouble in persuading an honest man to undertake his missions."

"How is Peter Mauluc attended?"

"He comes accompanied by fourscore spearmen, besides grooms and squires."

"I will not admit any of them within these walls," said De Bruis. "If Mauluc wills to de-

liver the king's greetings, he must be content to enter singly. So tell him Gilbert Leigh."

Mauluc replied, that "as he could safely confide in the lord of Bramber's honour, he had no objection to enter the castle without followers." So Gilbert Leigh introduced him.

"What is thy business here, Peter Mauluc?" demanded De Bruis, sternly.

"I have no business of my own; I come in the name of King John, my master."

"And what would King John with me?"

"Our royal liege hath been informed that thou art in league with the King of France and the Pope, for the ruin of the realm, and the overthrow of the regal authority in this unhappy kingdom."

"Whoever dares to utter such things of me speaks most falsely," retorted De Bruis; "and I will prove him to be a foul calumniator, either before a quest of my peers, or in mortal combat in the lists, as the king may please to appoint, in test of my loyalty."

"The king hath chosen a more satisfactory plan than either of these," replied Mauluc. "Forasmuch as thy peers are, for the most part, like thyself, malcontent, and opposed to his royal authority, he doth not deem it expedient to bring thee to a trial for thy treasonable practices before them; neither will he permit the monstrous absurdity of appeal by battle, to be tried in proof of innocence, by thee or by any one else. So it is his royal will and pleasure, that thou give pledges or sureties to him, for thy future loyalty and good conduct as a subject."

"And what pledges doth the king demand?"

"The king will accept of none other than thy children," said Mauluc.

"My children!" exclaimed De Bruis, starting

from his seat, and half-drawing his sword from its sheath, "doth King John think to bereave me of these precious objects of a father's love? Go tell him that I would sooner part with the last drop of my blood, than resign one of them to his keeping."

"Nay, but what reason shall I give my lord the king for thy rude refusal?"

"Tell him," said Lady de Bruis, "that he who hath barbarously murdered his own nephew, is not fit to be trusted with the keeping of his nobles' children. Tell him, moreover, that he shall not have my precious ones to slay, as he hath done that princely flower, Arthur of Brittany, his lawful sovereign; in which foul crime, thou, Peter Mauluc, wert his vile accomplice."

Peter Mauluc turned pale with rage and malice at these words, for he was not aware that his share in Prince Arthur's murder was suspected.

"Lady de Bruis," said he, "I will bear your message, as well as your lord's defiance, to King John."

"I have sent no defiance to King John," replied De Bruis. "I have only refused to comply with a demand which the most loyal of his subjects is not bound, by any tie of duty or allegiance, to grant. You may tell King John, withal, that I am a true subject—ready to perform my *devoir* in battle for my king and country, and to lead my vassals to the field, to oppose the armies of the King of France, the Pope, or any foreign power whatsoever that shall dare to set foot, with hostile intentions, in England. He hath a right, in such case, to command my vassals and myself; but my children are my own, and he shall not have them."

"You cannot withhold them from him, if it be

his pleasure to take them into his keeping, proud Lord of Bramber," said Mauluc.

"I will defend them to my last gasp," cried De Bruis, grasping his sword-hilt.

"King John will presently show you that he hath a will of his own, and is able to make that will a law to his disobedient subjects."

"Get hence with thee, thou evil-spoken villain," cried Lady de Bruis, passionately. "Thy very name signifieth ill-luck; and, truly, it was in a bad hour for us that ever thou wert permitted to set foot within our castle."

"Ay, ay, proud dame, and so I mean thou and thy lord shall find it," muttered Mauluc, as he withdrew.

CHAPTER II.

DE BRUIS AND HIS CHILDREN.—THE STORY OF PRINCE ARTHUR.—PRINCE JOHN USURPS HIS THRONE.—CONFINES ARTHUR IN THE CASTLE OF FALAISE.—HUBERT DE BURGH.—HE IS ORDERED BY KING JOHN TO PUT OUT ARTHUR'S EYES.—HIS REFUSAL.—PRINCE ARTHUR REMOVED TO ROUEN.—MURDERED BY KING JOHN.—THROWN INTO THE SEINE BY PETER MAULUC.—KING JOHN ARRAIGNED OF MURDER BY THE KING OF FRANCE.—CONVICTED AND SENTENCED.—THE PRINCESS ELEANOR.

THE pale, terrified children of De Bruis, who had retreated behind their father for protection during the angry conference between him and the royal messenger, now advanced, and expressed their joy at the departure of Mauluc, by shouting and clapping their hands with childish exultation.

"Why," said young William to his father,

"did the king want to get us into his keeping?"

"Because, my boy, he imagined that he should then be able to make me do as he pleased, even against my conscience," replied De Bruis. "If I refused to obey him, he would threaten me with killing you and your dear sisters."

"And would you have done anything that you knew was wrong, to preserve our lives, my father?" asked the boy.

"I hope I should have had sufficient strength of mind to resist a wicked command, however dearly it might cost me, William," said De Bruis; "for no man ought to allow even his affection for his children to interfere with the performance of his duty to God and his country."

"And now will you tell us who Prince Arthur of Brittany was, and what you and my mother meant by saying, the king and Peter Mauluc had murdered him?" said little Jane.

"Ah! that is a sorrowful story, Jane," said her father: "you had better not ask about it, for I am afraid it will make you all weep."

"But I like to weep at a sorrowful story," said Blanche, "especially if it be a true one. So pray, dear father, do tell us about poor Prince Arthur and his cruel uncle."

"And take me on your knee, and let me lean my head on your bosom, sweet father mine, and then you will not see me cry, when you tell of the fair young prince's death," said Jane.

"And I will be very good, and will not cry at all," said little Hugh, bringing his stool, and placing it at his father's feet, and looking eagerly up in his face for him to begin his tale.

"You must know, my children," said De Bruis, "that King John, who at present reigneth over these realms, had an elder brother, named Geoff-

rey, who married Constance, Duchess of Brittany, to whom King Henry the Second, his father, was guardian. Geoffrey and Constance were blessed with a fair daughter, named Eleanor; but Geoffrey died prematurely, and their son, Prince Arthur, was not born till after his father's death, during the reign of his grandfather, King Henry. When King Henry died, our late lord, Richard the First, surnamed *Cœur de Lion*, succeeded to the throne; and after a reign of ten years, he was mortally wounded by an arrow. On his death-bed, he desired that his young nephew, Prince Arthur, who was the rightful heir to the throne of England, might succeed him. But Prince John, the youngest of King Henry's sons, seized upon King Richard's treasures, and, with the assistance of his mother, Queen Eleanor, who took his part in preference to that of her orphan grandson, Arthur, usurped the crown. Not content with causing himself to be proclaimed King of England, he drove Prince Arthur out of his foreign dominions, the provinces of Anjou, Touraine, and Maine, which had all declared for Arthur, the lawful heir of the Plantagenets.

"Arthur then, with the Duchess Constance, his mother, took refuge at the court of King Philip of France, who espoused his cause. Though he was only fifteen years old, King Philip knighted him, and betrothed him to the Princess Mary, his daughter, and sent him at the head of an army into the dominions for which he was the vassal of France, in order that he might regain them from his uncle, before he ventured to attack England.

"The first thing he did was to besiege the strong castle of Mirabeau, which was obstinately defended by his unnatural grandmother, Queen Eleanor, till the arrival of King John with a great army;

who, on the night of July 31st, 1202, compelled the besiegers to surrender. He behaved with the greatest cruelty to all the nobles who had taken up arms for his nephew. He had them loaded with heavy irons, and thrown into dungeons—some in England, and some in Normandy; and there is every reason to believe, that he caused two-and-twenty of these unfortunate captives to be starved to death at Corfe Castle."

"And why, my father, did his subjects permit such cruelty to be permitted by the wicked tyrant?" exclaimed William.

"We did not know it, my boy, till years after it had taken place," replied De Bruis. "The reason why the king bears me, and some other of his barons, such ill-will, is because we have endeavoured to deprive him of the power of perpetrating such crimes for the future."

"But, dear father, you promised to tell us all about Prince Arthur, and we want to hear what became of him," said Blanche.

"It is a sad tale, my girl," replied De Bruis; "but since you wish so much to hear it, I will relate the sequel of the misfortunes of that ill-fated prince. He was carried prisoner to the castle of Falaise, in Normandy, where he remained some time under the care of Hubert de Burgh, who had been one of King Richard's most approved warriors. Hubert treated his hapless prisoner with more kindness and consideration than was by any means pleasing to his cruel master, who was constantly urging him to put Arthur secretly to death.

"One day, John came to the castle of Falaise, and, desiring to see his captive nephew, spoke to him with deceitful blandishments, and promised to set him free, if he would make a formal renunciation of all his claims in his favour. Arthur,

with more spirit than prudence, exclaimed, 'I will not give up the rights which I inherit from my father, to his younger brother. Restore to me my kingdom of England, which thou hast falsely usurped.'

"King John withdrew in a transport of rage, and commanded that Hubert de Burgh should forthwith put out the eyes of the young Prince Arthur, with red-hot irons.

"De Burgh was greatly grieved at these barbarous orders; but he feared to disobey his cruel master. When he entered the apartment of the poor captive, with the ruffians who had undertaken to execute the king's cruel sentence, Prince Arthur, who was terrified at the stern countenances of these men, asked Hubert for what purpose they came.

" 'Alas, unhappy youth!' replied Hubert, 'thou hast given such deadly offence to the king, thine uncle, with thy late rash speeches to him, that he hath sent hither these men to put out thine eyes.'

"Then Arthur threw himself at the feet of Hubert, and supplicated him so piteously, with cries and tears, to spare his sight, that Hubert de Burgh, who was really a noble character, was prevailed upon to show compassion to him. He, therefore, though at the risk of his own life, went straightway to King John, and told him that he neither could nor would perform his cruel orders.

"King John was furious at this, and would have slain Hubert for disobeying his commands, had he not felt that Hubert was one of the bravest captains that he had, and ever ready to assist him in all honourable services. The wicked king, indeed, had so few friends, that he could not afford to deprive himself of one so valiant and faithful as Hubert de Burgh. He contented himself,

therefore, with reproaching him for not ridding him of his youthful rival, and then removed poor Arthur from under his gentle wardship, to a stricter prison at Rouen.

“Poor Arthur soon perceived that his end was near at hand. His jailors waited upon him in gloomy silence, and no one approached to speak comfort to him. At Falaise, though not acknowledged to be King of England, he had been treated with the respect to which he was entitled as Duke of Brittany; and Hubert de Burgh did everything in his power to amuse and cheer his captivity. At Rouen, his imprisonment was like that of a malefactor, rather than that of a prince; he was kept in a high, gloomy tower, with grated windows, which overhung the river Seine, and from which there was no possibility of escape.

“It is to be hoped that the princely youth, when he found himself thus cut off from all hopes of an earthly crown, and deprived of the society of his fond mother, beloved sister, and all his friends and attendants, employed his solitary hours in holy meditation and prayer to God. He might thus hope to obtain a heavenly inheritance, that fadeth not away, in the place of that perilous greatness which had proved so sorrowful a birthright to him.

“On the 3d of April, at midnight, Arthur was rudely awakened from his sleep by one of his pitiless jailors, who ordered him to rise and follow him.

“The high spirit of the princely boy had been so broken by sorrow, privation, and long confinement, that he passively obeyed the mandate of his harsh jailor, and followed him down the winding stone stairs, and out of the postern-door of the tower. At another time, the fresh air from the

river, which blew freely on the fevered brow of the poor captive, would have been welcomed with delight, as something reminding him of liberty, and the pleasures of his happy childhood; but now he shivered and shrunk from it, for the night was damp and cloudy, and chilled his enervated frame. The rude, stern manner of the ruffian filled him with alarm, especially when he took him by the arm, and told him to step into a little boat that was moored beneath the castle walls.

"Prince Arthur trembled, and drew back, for there were two dark figures seated in the boat. When the moon, which had hitherto been obscured, burst in sudden radiance from her cloud, and threw a flood of brightness over the blue waters of the Seine, he recognised in one of these men the features of his uncle, King John."

"And who was the other?" cried the children, eagerly.

"The other was Peter Mauluc, his equerry," replied De Bruis.

"Was it the same Peter Mauluc who came hither to demand us?" asked the children, turning very pale.

"The same, my children," said their father; "he was in the boat with King John, when Prince Arthur was compelled to enter it."

"Alack! and what befell him then?" said Blanche.

"Poor child! he threw himself at his uncle's feet, and wept, and prayed hard for his life, as those in the castle, who from the rampart secretly witnessed the scene, do testify. But, woe the while! his prayer was preferred to one who had no pity in him; and it is said, that even while he clasped his uncle's knees, and sued to him for mercy, the ruthless tyrant seized him by his flow-

ing hair, which was long and beautiful, and plunged his dagger into his bosom; and then Peter Mauluc tied heavy stones to his feet, and threw his bleeding body into the deep waters of the Seine. This was the end of the royal Arthur Plantagenet, who was born Duke of Brittany, and heir of England, Ireland, Normandy, Aquitaine, and the provinces of Anjou, Touraine, Maine, and Poitou."

"And did no punishment fall on the wicked tyrant, his uncle?" asked William de Bruis.

"Yes, my boy; the contempt and abhorrence of all the world, which, in itself, is no trifling retribution," replied his father; "and not only that, but the loss of a third of his dominions. The King of France summoned John, who, as Duke of Normandy and Aquitaine, was the vassal of France, to answer before a court of the peers, for having murdered, within the jurisdiction of France, the young Duke of Brittany, who was also a vassal of France. It was, too, an aggravation of his crime, that Arthur was his own nephew—whom he was bound, by the feudal laws, as well as the laws of nature, to protect—and the son-in-law of King Philip, the suzerain, or lord-paramount of both, to whom he owed honour as well as fealty.

"King John did not appear to defend himself from this heavy charge; and, therefore, he was, by this court, sentenced to death, as a murderer; which sentence may be executed upon him if ever he becomes a prisoner to France. He was further declared to have forfeited all his continental dominions, for which he and his predecessors had been accustomed to pay homage to the King of France. The three counties of Touraine, Maine, and Anjou, were accordingly annexed to the

French crown in the year 1203; the duchy of Normandy, in 1205; and the county of Poitou in the following year. King John had neither the power nor the courage to resist the sentence of the French peers; and even his own vassals were so much shocked at his atrocious conduct, that none took up arms to prevent the alienation of these rich provinces."

"But poor Prince Arthur had a sister, you said; what became of her, my father?" asked Blanche.

"Alack, poor heart! she is a prisoner in Bristol Castle," replied De Buis, "where I fear she is likely to remain, though she is, of right, Duchess of Brittany and Queen of England. She is so beautiful, that, before she fell into her cruel uncle's hands, she was called the pearl of Brittany; but now, I dare say, she is faded with grief and her long imprisonment, for she has been in close captivity for six years, and nothing will induce King John to set her free."

"Dear father," said Jane, "you were very good not to give us to that wicked King John, to shut us up in a doleful prison, like the fair maid of Brittany, his niece."

"Or, perhaps, to murder us, as he did poor Prince Arthur," said Blanche. "But do you think he will come and take us away from you by force?"

"He shall take my heart from my bosom first!" replied De Buis, affectionately folding his trembling children in his arms.

CHAPTER III.

DE BRUIS FLEES FROM THE WRATH OF JOHN.—IS PURSUED AND BROUGHT BACK.—CONVEYED TO WINDSOR BY SIR PETER MAULUC.—KING JOHN ORDERS THE WHOLE FAMILY TO BE STARVED TO DEATH.—FRUITLESS APPEAL TO HIM FOR MERCY.—DE BRUIS, HIS LADY, AND FOUR CHILDREN, SHUT UP IN A TOWER IN WINDSOR CASTLE.

NOW Peter Mauluc, when he returned to King John, repeated to him not only the stern refusal of the Lord of Bramber to give up his children for hostages, but also all the bitter expressions which Lady de Bruis had imprudently used respecting the murder of Prince Arthur. On this, the king, who was one of the wickedest men in the world, swore, with a great oath, that he would be revenged on the whole family of De Bruis, root and branch, and forthwith ordered out an army, with which he marched against Bramber Castle.

Bramber Castle was not well prepared for a siege, and De Bruis knew that it would be vain for him, though he was a powerful baron, to think of maintaining a war with the King of England. He had a fine castle in Ireland, of which his son, Reginald, was the deputy lord, and he therefore thought that it would be better, for the safety of his lady and his children, to abandon Bramber Castle, and take them all to Ireland.

Unfortunately for the lord of Bramber and his family, King John obtained intelligence of his design. He accordingly sent one of his ships of war to pursue the little vessel in which they had embarked. Though De Bruis's vessel out-sailed

the royal bark, and brought them safely to an Irish port, yet, scarcely had they landed, ere the captain of the king's ship, with a ruffian crew, came ashore, and, entering the house where they were lodged for the night, seized upon them all—hurried them on board his ship—and set sail with them for England.

It was to no purpose that the Lord of Bramber protested against this outrage, and his lady wept, and besought the seamen to have pity upon them and their dear children. The captain and his crew were obdurate; they paid no heed to her tears, or the supplications and cries of the terrified children, but carried them direct into the port of London. Here Sir Peter Mauluc came on board the vessel, and, having demanded the prisoners in the king's name, caused them to be put into a covered barge, and sailed with them up the river Thames, to Windsor Castle, where King John then was.

As soon as the cruel tyrant saw the Lord of Bramber and his captive family so completely in his power, he expressed the most malignant joy, and said that he would make their punishment an example for the intimidation of all his rebellious barons. So he commanded that they should all be shut up together in a prison-room, in one of the towers, and there starved to death.

Then the Lord of Bramber said to the king:

"I do not supplicate thy mercy for myself, for I know it would be vain; neither do I fear to die: but my helpless wife and children cannot have displeased thee. Therefore, I beseech thee to spare them, and let me bear the whole burden of thy wrath alone."

"Did not thy wife send a taunting message to me, by my equerry, Sir Peter Mauluc," said the

king, "when I sent him to demand thy children as hostages for thy good behaviour as a subject? Now, if thou hadst sent them to me with humble and loyal messages, commending them to my care, I would have treated them lovingly. They should have been reared and fed with mine own princely offspring, and they should have had no harder service than waiting upon the noble Lady Isabel, my queen. But since thou wert so hardy as to withhold them from me, and to treat my messenger despitefully, yea, and to speak words of me which cannot be forgiven, I will teach thee, and all other rebels, what it is to trifle with the wrath of kings."

"But," said De Bruis, "my children, my innocent children, have not offended thee, and wherefore should they suffer?"

"For thy sake, and for the insolence of their mother, shall they die," replied the king.

Then Lady de Bruis threw herself at King John's feet, and, grasping his velvet mantle, besought him to have compassion on her little ones.

"You are a parent yourself," she said, "my royal lord. Think what you would feel if you heard your princely boys crying for food, and you had none to give them; if you saw your fair daughters fading from day to day before your sight, like the withered flowers that are parched up, and perish for lack of moisture, while you yourself were dying with them, of the same slow consuming pangs, and could not give them aid. Nay, turn, look upon my pretty ones, and let their tender age and helpless innocence plead for them."

"Woman," replied the king, "thou shouldst have thought of all this before thou didst

permit thy tongue to utter of me the things which have drawn this punishment upon thee and thine."

"I am content, and so is my lord, to suffer everything that thou shalt be pleased to inflict on us," said the lady; "but spare our guiltless babes, and they shall serve thee truly and faithfully, and thy children after thee. But if thou dost persist in destroying both them and us, know that we have another son, and they a brother, who is old enough, yea, and brave enough, to avenge us. He will call thee to a sharp reckoning for this crime which thou art wickedly minded to commit."

"Nay, since you venture to use threats to your sovereign, dame," said the king, "you give me sufficient reason for what I do in destroying thy traitorous brood, as well as thy husband and thyself; therefore, shall ye all die!" So saying, he withdrew his mantle from the agonizing grasp of the unfortunate mother, and departed—having been repeatedly urged so to do by his evil counsellor, Sir Peter Mauluc, who stood behind him, whispering things to harden his heart.

It was a dismal sound when the massive doors of the prison-room closed upon the hapless family, to be opened no more. When they heard the sullen grating of the bolts and bars that fastened them in, they looked at each other in hopeless anguish, and the colour faded from every cheek.

"And shall we never go hence, my father?" asked Blanche.

"I fear not, my child," said De Buis; "for the walls are thick, and the windows are too high and narrow, and strongly grated with iron bars withal, to allow us to break through. We must resolve to bear our hard fate with courage

and with patience, and pray to God to forgive us our sins, and to receive us into his heavenly habitations, when we depart our frail, earthly tabernacles of flesh, which we must shortly do, my pretty Blanche. So let us prepare ourselves for the change that awaiteth us."

"But it is so hard to die," sobbed Jane; "and we have done no harm to any one."

"Have we not often forgotten our duty to God, my little Jane, and delighted in other things more than in Him?" said De Bruis. "I was proud, and fancied myself better than my poor neighbours, because I had a stately castle and wide domains, and was waited upon by many servants. I trusted in these things, and, behold! they are all taken from me. I now fain would, if it were permitted me, change lots with the poorest of those who were glad to receive alms at my castle-gate."

"And I," said Lady de Bruis, "exulted in mine own heart, because I was a baron's lady, and wore jewels, and garments embroidered with silver and with gold. I was then too proud of my husband and my children—and lo! four of them are doomed to perish before mine eyes; while, perhaps, my foolish boast to King John, about mine eldest-born, may occasion his cutting off also."

She wrapt her face in her veil, and wept.

"And alack!" said Blanche, "I now remember, that when a poor beggar-girl came to ask us for alms, Jane and I have said, 'We are glad we are not like that poor ragged girl! We can give alms, instead of begging for them.' But now we should be glad of some of the dry crusts she had in her wallet."

"Yes," sobbed Jane; "and instead of speaking

kindly to her, we sent our alms to her by one of our serving-men. But William was better than us, for he went to her, and comforted her; and when he learned that she had a sick father in the village, he went to see him, and saved all his dried fruit and sweet cakes from the dessert, to give old Ralph, till he got well."

"Ah," said William, "I had forgotten all about it, Jane; but I am very glad I did so. The fruit and the cakes would have done me no good if I had eaten them, but the remembrance of the use to which I put them is sweet in this hour. But I have often been very dainty and unthankful at my meals, and refused to eat plain food, because I craved for high-seasoned dishes. I shall now feel the want of the victuals I have rejected with proud words."

"And I," said little Hugh, "have been very naughty, too; for I have often poured milk on the floor, and thrown bread into the fire, when I was wilful, and did not like my breakfast. Nurse used to tell me that many poor children would be glad of the food I wasted; and that I might come to want too, though I was a proud baron's son. Ah! nurse does not know how glad I should be of it now, for I am very hungry."

"And now, my children," said De Brûis, "you must not complain of the injustice of God; since from the eldest to the least among us, all have sinned, and done something to provoke his displeasure."

"But," said Jane, "there are so many who have done much worse things than we have done, and yet they are not punished so heavily as we are."

"My child," replied De Brûis, "God deals with us mercifully, in bringing us to a recollection

of our sins, even by this severe visitation of his wrath, to the end that we may repent, and be reconciled to him, through the grace and mediation of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, who died to save from the bitter pains of everlasting death the souls of such as trust in him. Now, as we had all forgotten him in our prosperity, and trusted in the good things of this world, and loved them instead of Him, it was necessary to chasten us, by showing us the worthless and transitory nature of the things which we loved more than we did our God. Let us, my children, then, instead of murmuring at His decrees in punishing us, when greater criminals go free, rather bless His goodness, in awarding us our correction in this world, instead of permitting us, like those of whom you speak, to live on in our sins till we died in them, and were separated from His presence for ever."

"It was only last week that I beat nurse, when she asked me to say my prayers, and refused to say them," observed Hugh.

"And I have often forgotten mine, or thought of other things when I pretended to say them," said William.

"Alas! and so have I," observed Blanche.

"And I have done so, also," said Jane.

"Yes, my children, and if you go on in the task of self-examination, you will call to mind so many trespasses against God's holy will and commandments, that you will marvel at your ignorance of your own nature, in thinking that your lives had been blameless," said De Bruis.

In this manner did the death-doomed family commune together, during the first day of their woful captivity in their doleful prison-tower in Windsor Castle, till a heavenward spirit of resig-

nation was diffused upon them from above. Some of them began to think that the bitterness of death was past; but the stern trial that was appointed for them was scarcely begun.

CHAPTER IV.

CONTINUED SUFFERINGS OF THE FAMILY.—A PRIEST PERMITTED TO VISIT THEM.—ADMINISTERS CHRISTIAN CONSOLATION.—HE APPEALS TO KING JOHN FOR THEIR RELEASE, AND IS REPULSED.—HUGH DIES OF FAMINE.—WILLIAM SAVED BY THE PRIEST.—DEATH OF LADY DE BRUIS AND HER DAUGHTERS.—DEATH OF THE LORD OF BRAMBER.—WILLIAM JOINS HIS BROTHER IN IRELAND.—MAGNA CHARTA SIGNED BY KING JOHN, WHO IS COMPELLED TO RESTORE THE LANDS OF DE BRUIS.—WRETCHED DEATH OF JOHN.

ON the following morning sorrow and heaviness returned; for the sharp pangs of hunger were felt by all. The children had promised one another not to weep or complain, but they could not refrain from casting piteous looks upon their parents, from time to time.

“Such looks,” their sad mother said, “as must have moved even the hard heart of the king to compassion, could he but have seen them.” But he saw them not. He sat at the banquet with his riotous companions, feasting on dainties, and quaffing the red wine to inebriation, in the vain endeavour to drown the remorse of a guilty conscience, for the murder of his princely nephew, and for all the other crimes which have made his name a blot in the history of his country, and the abhorrence of posterity.

While King John was then carousing, one of his lords asked him, “If he would not allow the

unfortunate Lord of Bramber, and his family, the comfort of a priest, to pray with them?"

"Ay," replied the king, "if one can be found bold enough to act in defiance of the Pope's interdict, which prohibits all the offices of religion at this season."

Now, no really holy man would be withheld by any such decree, from the performance of a Christian duty; and a venerable priest named Cyril, the brother of the jailor's wife, then sojourning in Windsor Castle, declared himself ready to visit the death-doomed captives, and to offer to them the consolations of religion, without any regard to the Pope's prohibition.

When Cyril entered the gloomy cell, and beheld the famishing children, and their sorrowful parents, he was deeply touched with compassion, and he burst into tears. It was some time before he could recover his firmness sufficiently to address them with the usual salutation of "Peace be with ye."

"The peace of God is with us, holy father," replied the Lord of Bramber; "yet the sorrow of the flesh presseth us sore."

"He who died for thy sins, my son, had to drink of the very dregs of bitterness; yet he submitted himself to the will of his heavenly Father, saying, 'Not my will, but thine be done.'"

"I would fain imitate the blessed example of my crucified Redeemer's meekness under all his sufferings," replied De Bruis; "and methinks I could suffer and be still, if I suffered alone; but my children—"

"Oh, my children!" cried Lady de Bruis, with a sharp and piercing cry. "Save them, holy father; if the love and fear of Him in whose heavenly name you come. be with you, save my children!"

"Alas! unhappy lady," replied Cyril, "you would not need to use entreaties to urge me to do that, if it were in my power. But how shall a feeble old man, like me, rescue the prey from the ruthless paw of the lion?"

"Give us food, old man! give us food!" we are perishing of hunger!" shrieked the children, who had hitherto been resting in a sort of gloomy stupor on the floor at their mother's feet.

"It is cruel kindness in me to prolong your earthly sufferings by this ineffectual supply; but I am too weak to resist your entreaties," replied the priest, drawing the fragment of a loaf of rye-bread from under his gown.

"May the blessing of God be with you for this charity," cried Lady de Bruis, eagerly snatching the precious boon from Cyril's hand.

De Bruis, with deeper feeling still, raised his tearful eyes to heaven, in silent thanksgiving, and blessed and brake the bread among his starving children.

William refused the share that was proffered to him, saying, "Save it for the others; I do not wish to eat again. Since we shall have no further supply, this morsel is only feeding the exhausted lamp of life for a moment, when it might expire in peace."

"Are you so willing to die then, my son?" asked Cyril.

"I am resigned to the will of God, whether for life or death; though if it be his pleasure, I would fain live," replied the youth.

"Oh, save us, save us, from the cruel death to which the king hath doomed us!" cried Lady de Bruis, hanging on Cyril's garments.

"I have already told you, lady, that it is impos-

sible ; but I will go to the king, and plead with him for your lives," replied the old man.

He did so ; but the cruel tyrant denied his suit with harsh and threatening words ; and Cyril returned with a sorrowful heart to the unfortunate captives to relate his ill-success.

"I did not expect it to be otherwise," replied De Bruis. "I knew that King John, having once conceived wickedness in his evil heart, would carry his purpose into execution. But yet a little while, and we shall be beyond the reach of his malice. Lo ! one of his victims hath escaped from his power already, and is now, I trust, a ministering angel in the presence of his God." As he spoke, he pointed to the dead body of Hugh, that little sufferer having expired since Cyril's last visit.

"Blessed are they whom the Lord early summoneth from the cares and trials of a world of sin and sorrow," said the old man.

"Yea," replied De Bruis, "I would that we were all as my little Hugh now is."

But Lady de Bruis wept and tore her hair, lamenting for her child, and refusing to be comforted either by her husband or the priest.

"Oh ! if I could save one of my children, only one of them, from this cruel death, I should be content," she exclaimed.

"Which of your children do you most desire to save ?" asked Cyril.

"Which ?"—repeated the distracted mother, gazing wildly from her pale, wasted, but still lovely and beloved, daughters, to her manly boy, who had endured all his sufferings with the meekness of a Christian, and the firmness of a hero—"Which ! how can you ask a mother such a question, old man ? I would have thee save them all."

"It is impossible to save more than one, lady," said the priest.

"But can you really save one?" asked the Lord of Bramber, eagerly.

"I fear it is scarcely possible to do that," replied the priest; "but I will make the attempt, if you will decide on which child it is to be."

"They are all alike to me," said the fond parent, folding his children to his bosom. "Which of you wishes most to go hence from these gloomy walls, my children?" he asked; and the children replied, "We none wish to leave you and our dear mother."

"But there is a chance of escape for one of you," said Lady de Bruis; "and one of you shall go with this good man; and oh! it will be such consolation to me, in the hour of death, to know that one of my precious children yet liveth."

"Come, then, you shall draw lots which it is to be," said the priest to the three children. So they drew lots, and the lot fell on William de Bruis.

Then his father said, "I am content that the lot hath so fallen; not that I love William more than I do my sweet girls, but that I think he is better fitted to stem the storms of this rude world than either of his sisters. What would my tender Blanche, and my poor little Jane, do without their mother and myself? William is of a courageous spirit. He will be able to go to Ireland, and to make his way through that wild country to his elder brother's castle, to bear him my dying blessing, and my last command, which is, that he shall not seek to revenge our death; but rather to forgive our murderer, and to pray God to change his heart for the sake of our unhappy country."

I will not relate the sorrowful parting between

William de Bruis and his unfortunate parents and sisters. It is calculated to make the heart too sad. They all knew that they should meet no more on earth ; and William would fain have tarried with them, but their father forbade him.

When it was quite dark, the priest, who had petitioned for leave to remove the dead body of little Hugh from the apartment, brought a black velvet pall, as he said, to "wrap it in decently." Instead of the dead Hugh, he enveloped the living William in the pall, and carried him out of the prison into the chapel. There he fed and refreshed him, and after a time he disguised him in the habit of a serving-lad, and sent him to Ireland, in the train of the Earl of Pembroke, where he soon reached the castle of his eldest brother, by whom he was most affectionately welcomed.

Reginald de Bruis listened to the sad story of the mournful fate of his beloved family with the deepest grief and indignation. It was, however, out of his power to aid them ; for his mother died the same night that her son William escaped from Windsor Castle ; her two daughters on the following day ; and the Lord of Bramber did not survive them many hours. Purified by his earthly sufferings, and full of holy resignation and trust in the mercies of his Redeemer, his weary spirit parted in peace, and in the blessed hope of a reunion with his beloved family, in those realms where all sorrows are forgotten, and the spirits of the just, made perfect, enter into that joy which passeth all human understanding.

In the year 1215, when the assembled Barons of England met their craven sovereign at Runnymede, and, with drawn swords, compelled him to sign the great Charter of English liberty, called from thence *Magna Charta*, they also forced him

to restore to Reginald de Bruis the lands and lordship of Bramber, which he had unjustly confiscated.

John, after a miserable reign of seventeen years, seven months, and ten days, died of weariness and vexation of spirit, at Newark. Some historians say, that he died of poison, administered by a monk of Swineshead Abbey, in a pear; but be this as it may, his death, according to every account, was as wretched as his life had been wicked; and his memory is loaded with infamy and contempt.

WILLIAM TELL.

A TALE OF SWITZERLAND.

CHAPTER I.

WILLIAM TELL AND HIS FAMILY.—STATE OF SWITZERLAND UNDER THE AUSTRIANS.—TYRANNICAL DECREE OF GESSLER, THE GOVERNOR OF URI.—TELL AND THE BROTHERS OF GRUTLI.

THERE are few names in history more admirable than that of William Tell, the deliverer of Switzerland; yet, strange to say, his surname, *Tell*, is a word which, in the rude language of Uri, the province or canton of Switzerland where he was born, signifies a fool.

William Tell was born towards the close of the thirteenth century. I cannot tell you the precise year of his birth; but in the year 1307 he was a married man, and lived with his wife and children, in the village of Bürglen, near the great town of Altdorf, in the canton of Uri.

Switzerland is a land of mountains and valleys, lakes, and mighty rivers. The peasants are a bold and hardy race, who get their living either by tilling the land, feeding flocks and herds, or hunting the chamois—a species of the wild goat, very swift and active, that dwells among the glaciers, or ice-cliffs, of the Alpine mountains. The skins of the chamois are valuable; and the hunters of the Alps are very daring in their pursuit

WILLIAM TELL.



William Tell escaping from the Boat.



Gessler slain by William Tell.

of these creatures, which they chase at the peril of their lives, from crag to crag of the steep, slippery glaciers, till they can approach near enough to take aim. From long practice, they are such expert marksmen, that they seldom shoot in vain.

In our days, the chamois-hunters carry a light sort of gun, called a rifle; but in the time of William Tell, the Alpine hunters shot with cross-bows—the use of powder and shot being then unknown in Switzerland.

William Tell maintained his family chiefly by hunting the chamois, and shooting other wild game. So skilful was he in the use of the bow, and so unerring was his aim, that the fame of his exploits in that way had obtained for him the name of “The Crossbow-man of Bürglen.” He was also very skilful in the management of boats upon the lakes. His father had followed the profession of a pilot, and William Tell, though he preferred the life of a hunter, understood the navigation of the lakes better than almost any boatman in the canton of Uri. It was a saying, “That William Tell knew how to handle the rudder as expertly as the bow.” In short, he was a person of strong natural talents, who observed on everything he saw, and acquired all the knowledge he could.

Switzerland was at that time in a state of slavery to Albert, Duke of Austria, who had recently been elected Emperor of Germany. He had taken great offence with the Swiss, because they wished Count Adolph of Nassau to be elected Emperor of Germany instead of him. Count Adolph was, indeed, chosen in the first instance; but it was a disputed matter, and after a war, which lasted six years, between Duke Albert and Count Adolph, the latter lost his life and the im-

perial crown together, at the battle of Spires, in the year 1298; and then Albert became emperor without further opposition.

The first use he made of his power was to punish the Swiss, for having favoured the cause of his rival; and he was so unwise as to declare publicly, "that he would no longer treat them as subjects, but as slaves." In pursuance of this wicked resolution, he deprived them of many of their rights and privileges, altered their ancient laws and customs, and endeavoured to strip the clergy and the gentlemen of their revenues.

By these proceedings the Emperor Albert rendered his government very unpopular, and when he found that the people expressed dissatisfaction, he built castles and fortresses all over the country, and filled them with soldiers to awe the people into submission. In each of these fortresses he placed a governor, who exercised despotic power in the district over which his sway extended. The inhabitants of the canton of Uri, in particular, had to complain of the oppression of their German governor, Gessler, who had committed several murders, and acted in such a manner as to excite general indignation, by his pride, cruelty, and injustice. The whole country was indeed ripe for a revolt, in case an opportunity should occur of throwing off the German yoke.

Having explained all these circumstances, I will now relate the tale, which, otherwise, it would not have been easy to understand, on account of its connection with the previous history and state of Switzerland, with which few juvenile readers are acquainted.

One cold autumnal evening, the bright red blaze of the cheerful fire which the loving wife of William Tell had kindled on the hearth,

against her husband's return, gleamed through the rude latticed casements of their cottage window. In those days, oiled canvass, strained across from lath to lath, formed an indifferent substitute for the modern invention of glass, which was then only seen in churches, and the mansions and palaces of the great. The earthen floor of the humble dwelling had been freshly swept; a clean but coarse cloth, of the careful matron's own spinning, was spread on the homely board, which was garnished with wooden bowls and spoons of the most snowy whiteness; and a kettle of fish-soup, with herbs, was stewing over the fire. Some flat oaten cakes, designed to be eaten hot with butter, were baking on the hearth.

The babe was sleeping peacefully in the cradle; two or three of the other little ones, weary with their sportive play, had been laid in their cribs. Henric and Lewis, two lovely boys of five and six years old, having promised to be very good, if allowed to sit up till their father's return, were watching the proceedings of their mother, who was employed in roasting a fine fat quail for their father's supper, which their cousin, Lalotte, who had arrived at the discreet age of fourteen, was basting, and spinning the string by which it was suspended before the fire.

"Mother," said Henric, "if my father does not come home very soon, that quail will be done too much."

"What then?" asked Lalotte.

"I was thinking, cousin Lalotte, that it would be a pity for it to be spoiled, after you and mother have taken so much pains in cooking it; and it smells so very good."

"Oh, fie! you greedy child; you want to eat the bird that is cooking for your father's supper,"

said Lalotte. "If I were my aunt, I would send you to bed only for thinking of such a thing."

"You are not the mistress—you are not the mistress!" cried the sturdy rebel Henric; "and I shall not go to bed at your desire."

"But you shall go to bed, young sir, if your cousin Lalotte tells you so to do," said his father, who had entered during the dispute.

"Alack!" cried Henric, turning to his little brother, "if we had only been patient, Lewis, we should have tasted the nice quail, and heard all our father's news into the bargain."

"There now, see what you have lost by being naughty children," cried Lalotte, as she led the offenders into their little bed-room.

"Thy father's news is not for thy young ears, my boys," murmured William Tell, as the door closed after the unconscious children.

"There is a sadness in thy voice, and trouble on thy brow," said the anxious wife of Tell, looking earnestly in his face. "Wilt thou not trust me with the cause of thy care?"

"Annette," replied Tell, "thou hast been a good and faithful wife to me—yea, and a prudent counsellor and friend in the time of need. Why, then, should I do a thing and conceal it from thee, my well-beloved?"

"What is it thou hast done, my husband?"

"That for which thou wilt blame me, perchance."

"Nay, say not so; thou art a good man, and whatever thou dost is right in my eyes."

"Thou knowest, my loving wife, the sad state of slavery to which this unhappy country of Switzerland is reduced by the unlawful oppression of our foreign rulers," said Tell.

"I do," she replied; "but what have peas-

ants to do with matters so much above them?"

"Much!" returned Tell. "If the good laws made by the worthies of the olden time, for the comfort and protection of all ranks of people, be set at naught by strangers, and all the ancient institutions, which were the pride and the glory of our land, be overthrown, by those to whom we owe neither the love of children, nor the allegiance of subjects, then, methinks, good wife, it becomes the duty of peasants, as well as of nobles, to stand forth in defence of their rights. I have engaged myself, with three-and-thirty of my valiant countrymen, who met this night on the little promontory of land that juts into a lonely angle of the Lake of Grutli, at the foot of the rock of Sulisberg, to concert with them means for the deliverance of my country."

"But how can three-and-thirty men hope to oppose the power of those who enthrall Switzerland?" asked the wife of Tell.

"Great objects are often effected by small instruments," replied he. "The whole population of Switzerland is exasperated against the German tyrants, who have of late abused their power so far as to rouse the indignation even of women and of children against them. The father of Arnold Melchthal, one of the 'Brothers of Grutli,' as our band is called, was recently put to a cruel death by the unjust sentence of Gessler, the governor of our own canton of Uri; and who knoweth, gentle wife, whether his jealous caprice may not induce him to single me out for his next victim?"

"Single thee out, my husband!" exclaimed Annette, turning pale. "Nay, what accusation could he bring against thee?"

"That of being the friend of my country, which

is, of course, a crime not to be forgiven by a person of Gessler's disposition."

"But Gessler is too much exalted above our humble sphere of life, to be aware of a peasant's sentiments on such matters," said Annette.

"Gessler will not permit us to indulge the thoughts of our hearts in secret," said Tell; "for he hath recently devised a shrewd test, whereby he is enabled to discern the freeman from the slave throughout this province."

"And what is the test which the governor of Uri employeth for that purpose?"

"Thou hast heard our good pastor read, in the book of Holy Writ, of the golden image, which the tyrant Nebuchadnezzar, in the pride and folly of his heart, caused to be erected in the plains of Dura. He made a decree that all nations and people of the world should bow down and worship it, and that those who refused to do so should be cast into a burning fiery furnace. Rememberest thou this, my beloved?"

"Certainly," Annette replied; "it is related in the Scripture of the prophet Daniel. But what hath Gessler to do with that presumptuous folly of the King of Babylon?"

"Gessler," replied Tell, "imitates the presumption, albeit it is not in his power to rival the grandeur, of Nebuchadnezzar; for he hath set up an idol in the market-place of Altdorf, to which he requireth blind homage to be paid by fools and cowards. Now, the King of Babylon's idol, the prophet tells us, was of solid gold, a metal which the world is, I grieve to say, too prone to worship; but Gessler's paltry Baal is but the empty ducal bonnet of Austria, which he hath exalted on a pole; and he commands the men of Uri to bow down before it, under penalty of death.

Wouldst thou wish thy husband to degrade the name of a Swiss, by stooping to such an action?"

"No," she replied; "I should blush for thee, if thou wert capable of such baseness."

"Thou hast spoken like a free woman, wife of Tell!" he exclaimed. "Yea, and thou shalt be the mother of free children: for the first time I go to Altdorf, I will resist the edict, which enjoins me and my countrymen to pay homage to the senseless bauble which the German governor hath exalted in the market-place."

"But why go to Altdorf at all, my husband?" said the wife of Tell.

"My business calls me to Altdorf, and I shall go thither, like an honest man, in the performance of my duty," replied Tell. "Thinkest thou that I am either to confess myself a slave, by bending my body to an empty cap, or to permit it to be a scarecrow, that shall fright me from entering the capital city of my native province, lest I should draw upon myself the penalty of refusing to perform a contemptible action, which hath been enjoined by a wicked man? No, no, my sweet wife; I shall go to Altdorf, when occasion may require, without considering myself bound to observe Gessler's foolish edict."

The return of Lalotte put an end to this discourse; and Annette began to assist her in taking up the supper.

CHAPTER II.

TELL'S CARE OF HIS BROTHER'S ORPHAN CHILDREN.—THE GOOD LALOTTE, AND THE THOUGHTLESS PHILIP.—TELL'S SUCCESS IN HUNTING.—ANTICIPATIONS OF THE FAIR AT ALTDORF.

LALOTTE was the orphan of Tell's brother. Her parents had both died when she and her brother Philip were very young, and they had been adopted into the family of her kind uncle soon after his marriage with Annette.

Lalotte was affectionate, sprightly, and industrious. She assisted her aunt in the household work and the dairy; and it was her business to take charge of the children, whom she carefully instructed in such things as she knew, and laboured to render them virtuous and obedient.

Her own brother, who was about a year older than herself, had been unfortunately a spoiled child. The consequence was, that Philip was self-willed and intractable, and, though far from a bad disposition, was always getting himself and others into scrapes and difficulties.

That night his place at the board was vacant, which his uncle observing, said,—

"Lalotte, where is your brother Philip?"

"Absent, as usual, without leave, uncle, I am sorry to say," replied Lalotte.

"It is not usual for Philip to desert the supper-meal," observed Tell, "even if he be absent the rest of the day. I am afraid he is after no good. He is a very troublesome fellow; and I hope neither Henric nor Lewis will turn out like him."

"Dear uncle, we are bringing them up after a

different fashion," replied Lalotte. "Little Henric would be very troublesome, if we permitted him to indulge his wayward fancies; but we reprove him when he does wrong, and encourage him when he is good. By these means, my aunt and I hope to render him worthy of being my uncle's eldest son."

"You must not flatter your uncle, you coaxing puss," cried Tell.

"Dear uncle," replied she, "it is no flattery to say it is an honour to be your child. I am proud of being only your niece; for you are so good and kind."

"Hush! hush! Lalotte: you must not talk so much about it. People should not express all they feel in praise of those to whom they are speaking."

A hasty step was now heard; and Lalotte exclaimed, "I should not wonder if that were my scapegrace brother, Philip!"

"It does not sound well of you to call him so, Lalotte, though he is a sad plague to us all," said Tell. "Sisters should rather cover their brothers' faults, than proclaim their follies."

The door was hastily opened, and Philip bounced in, out of breath, and covered with mud. He flung himself on a wooden settle beside the fire, and gave way to fits of laughter.

"How now, Philip! what is the cause of all this?" asked Tell gravely.

"Hurrah!" shouted he, springing from his seat, and dancing and capering about, "I have done such a deed!"

"Some notable piece of folly, no doubt," observed his uncle; "what is it, boy?"

"A deed that will render my name famous throughout the whole province of Uri, my good

uncle. Everybody is talking about it in Altdorf, at this very moment," exclaimed Philip, rubbing his hands.

"You have long been celebrated there as the ringleader of mischief," observed Tell; "but I doubt whether you will have much reason to exult in the evil reputation you have acquired, Philip. Therefore go to bed, and when you say your prayers, ask for grace to reform your evil habits."

"My good uncle," replied Philip, "be content. This night I have turned patriot, raised a rabble of boys, and pelted down the fool's cap which old Gessler, our governor, had stuck up in the market-place of Altdorf, for Switzers to pay homage to. Is not that a glorious deed, my master?"

"It is of a piece with the rest of your folly. Were you called upon to pay homage to the cap?"

"By no means, uncle, else must I perforce have made my obeisance to the empty bonnet of the Emperor-Duke of Austria. But this exploit of mine was after dark, when one boy could not be distinguished from another; and there were fully fifty of us engaged in pelting at the mock majesty till down it came, feathers and all, souse into the mud. Then, oh stars! how we all ran! But it was my stone that hit it, take notice: ha! ha! ha!"

"Your head must be as devoid of brains as the empty cap you pelted, Philip, or you never would have engaged in any such adventure."

"How, uncle!" cried Philip, in amaze; "would you have had me pay homage to the ducal bonnet without a head in it?"

It seems you were not required to do so,

Philip; therefore you had no pretext for raising a riot, to break the peace."

"But, uncle, do *you* intend to yield obedience to the governor's tyrannous edict?"

"Philip," replied Tell, "I am a man, and of age to form a correct judgment of the things which it may be expedient to do, or proper to refuse. But it is not meet for idle boys to breed riots, and commit acts of open violence, calculated to plunge a whole country into confusion."

Philip withdrew with an air of great mortification, and the family soon after retired to rest.

The next day William Tell took his thoughtless nephew with him, on a hunting excursion, since it was necessary he should find some better occupation than throwing stones. After several days they returned, loaded with the skins of the chamois that had been slain by the unerring arrows of Tell.

His wife and children hastened to the cottage-door to welcome him, when they beheld him coming. "Behold, my beloved," said Tell, "how well I have sped in the chase! These skins will bring in a mine of wealth against the winter season. To-morrow is Altdorf fair, and I shall go thither to sell them."

"Hurrah!" shouted Philip. "Is Altdorf fair to-morrow? Oh, my faith, I had forgotten it. Well, I shall go thither, and have some fun."

"And I mean to go too, cousin Philip," said Henric.

"Not so fast, young men," cried Tell. "Altdorf fair will be full of soldiers and turbulent people, and is not a proper place for rash boys and children."

"But you will take care of us, father, dear

father, pretty father," said Henric, stroking his father's arm caressingly.

"I shall have enough to do to take care of myself, Henric," replied Tell. "So you must be a good boy, and stay with your mother."

"But I won't be a good boy, if you leave me at home," muttered the little rebel. "I will be a naughty boy all day, and beat Lalotte."

"Then you must be whipped, sir," said his father; "for we love you too well to permit you to be naughty without punishing you."

On hearing this, Henric began to weep with anger. So his father told Lalotte to put him to bed without his supper.

Now Philip was a silly, good-natured fellow, and fancied that his little cousin, Henric, of whom he was very fond, was ill-treated by his father. So he took an opportunity of slipping a sweet-cake into his pouch, from the supper-board, with which he silyly stole to Henric's crib.

"Never mind my cross uncle, sweet cousin," said he: "see, I have brought you a nice cake."

"Oh! I don't care about cakes," cried Henric. "I want to go to Altdorf fair to-morrow."

"And you shall go to Altdorf fair, my sweet Henric," said Philip.

"But how can I go, when father says he won't take me?" sobbed Henric.

"There, dry your eyes, and go to sleep, my pretty cousin," whispered Philip, laying his face on the pillow, close to the wet, rosy cheek of the sulky child. "As soon as my uncle is gone, I will take you to the fair with me; for I mean to go, in spite of all he has said to the contrary."

"But what will mother say?" asked Henric.

"We won't let her know anything about it," said Philip.

"But Lalotte won't let us go; for Lalotte is very cross, and wants to master me."

"A fig for Lalotte!" cried the rude Philip; "do you think I care for her?"

"I won't care for Lalotte when I grow a great big boy like you, cousin Philip; but she makes me mind her now," said Henric.

"Never fear; we will find some way of outwitting Mademoiselle Lalotte to-morrow, be she ever so cunning," said Philip.

CHAPTER III.

ALTDORF FAIR.—TELL IS FOLLOWED THITHER BY PHILIP AND HENRIC.—LALOTTE PURSUES THEM.—SUCCESS OF TELL IN THE FAIR.—HE IS CHALLENGED BY THE GERMAN GUARD.—PHILIP BEING RECOGNISED, MAKES HIS ESCAPE.—TELL DISCOVERED BY LALOTTE AND HIS CHILD HENRIC.

THE next morning William Tell rose at an early hour, and proceeded to the fair at Altdorf, to sell his chamois skins.

Philip, instead of getting up, and offering to carry them for his uncle, laid in bed till after he was gone, though he was wide awake. He was pondering on his undutiful scheme of taking little Henric to the fair, in defiance of Tell's express commands that both should stay at home that day.

Henric could eat no breakfast that morning, for thinking of the project in which Philip had tempted him to engage. His kind mother patted his curly head, and gave him a piece of honeycomb, for not crying to go to the fair. He blushed crimson-red at this commendation, and

was just going to tell his mother all about it, when Philip, guessing his thoughts, held up his finger, and shook his head at him.

When his mother and Lalotte went into the dairy to churn the butter, they begged Henric and Philip to take care of Lewis and the other little ones, so that they should not get into any mischief. No sooner, however, were they gone, than Philip said,—

“Now, Henric, is our time to make our escape, and go to the fair.”

“But,” said Henric, “my mother gave me some sweet honeycomb just now, for being a good boy; and it will be very naughty of me to disobey my father’s commands after that. So, dear Philip, I was thinking that I would stay at home to-day, if you would stay too, and make little boats for me to float on the lake.”

“I shall do no such thing, I promise you,” replied Philip; “for I mean to go to the fair, and see the fun. You may stay at home, if you like—for I don’t want to be plagued with your company.”

“Oh, dear!” cried Henric, “but I want very much to go to the fair, and see the fun too.”

“Come along, then,” said Philip; “and don’t let us have any more words about it, or we shall not get there in time to see either the tumblers, or the apes and dancing bears, or the fire-eaters, or any other of the shows or pageants.”

It was nearly two hours before the truants were missed by Henric’s mother and Lalotte; for they were all that time busy in the dairy. At length they heard the children cry; on which, Lalotte ran into the room, and found no one with them but Lewis, who was trying to quiet the baby by rocking the cradle.

"What a shame," cried Lalotte, "for that great, lazy boy, Philip, to leave all these little ones, with only you, Lewis. Where is Henric, pray?"

"Oh! Henric is gone to the fair with Cousin Philip," lisped little Lewis.

"Oh, that wicked Philip!" cried Lalotte. "Aunt! aunt! Philip has run off to Altdorf fair, and taken Henric with him!"

"My dear Lalotte," said her aunt, "you must put on your hood and sabots, and run after them. Perhaps, as you are light-footed, you can overtake them, and bring Henric back. I am sure, some mischief will befall him with that scape-grace brother of yours."

Lalotte hastily threw her gray serge cloak about her, and drew the large hood, which in those days was used by female peasants instead of a bonnet, over her head. She slipped her little feet into her sabots, or wooden shoes, and took the road to Altdorf, hurrying along as fast as she could, in hope of overtaking the truants before they reached the town.

More than once the little maiden thought of turning back, but the remembrance of Philip's rash and inconsiderate temper filled her with alarm for the safety of the child whom he had tempted away from home. She reflected that, as her uncle was at Altdorf, it would be her wisest course to proceed thither to seek him out, and to inform him of his little boy, with the wayward Philip, being then, as she supposed, in the fair.

Lalotte entered the market-place of Altdorf, at the moment when her uncle, having disposed of his chamois-skins to advantage, was crossing from the carriers' stalls, to a clothier's booth, to purchase woollen cloths for winter garments.

Fairs were formerly marts, where merchants and artisans brought their goods for sale; and persons resorted thither, not for the purpose of riot and revelling, but to purchase useful commodities, clothing, and household goods, at the best advantage.

William Tell had been requested, by his careful wife, to purchase a variety of articles for the use of the family. He was so intent on performing all her biddings, to the best of his ability, that he never once thought of the cap which the insolent governor, Gessler, had erected in the market-place, till he found himself opposite to the lofty pole on which it was exalted. He would have passed it unconsciously, had he not been stopped by the German soldiers, who were under arms on either side the pole, to enforce obedience to the insulting edict of the governor of Uri. Tell then paused, and, raising his eyes to the object to which the captain of the guard, with an authoritative gesture, directed his attention, beheld the ducal cap of Austria just above him.

The colour mounted to the cheek of the free-born hunter of the Alps, at the sight of this badge of the slavery of his fallen country. Casting an indignant glance upon the foreign soldiers who had impeded his progress, he moved sternly forward, without offering the prescribed act of homage to the cap.

"Stop!" cried the captain of the guard; "you are incurring the penalty of death, rash man, by your disobedience to the edict of his excellency the governor of Uri."

"Indeed!" replied Tell. "I was not aware that I was doing anything unlawful."

"You have insulted the majesty of our lord;

the emperor, by passing that cap without bowing to it," said the officer.

"I wist not that more respect were due to an empty cap, than to a cloak and doublet, or a pair of hosen," replied Tell.

"Insolent traitor! dost thou presume to level thy rude gibes at the badge of royalty?" cried the governor, stepping forward from behind the soldiers, where he had been listening to the dispute between Tell and the officer.

Poor Lalotte, meantime, having caught a glimpse of her uncle's tall, manly figure through the crowd, had pressed near enough to hear the alarming dialogue in which he had been engaged with the German soldiers. While, pale with terror, she stood listening with breathless attention to what might next be said, she recognised Philip at no great distance, with little Henric in his arms, among the spectators.

The thoughtless Philip was evidently neither aware how near he was to his uncle, nor of the peril in which he stood. With foolish glee, he was pointing out the cap to little Henric; and though Lalotte could not hear what he was saying, she fancied he was rashly boasting to the child of his share in the exploit of pelting it down a few nights previous.

While her attention was thus painfully excited, she heard some of the people round her saying—

"Who is it that has ventured to resist the governor's decree?"

"It is William Tell, the crossbow-man of Bürglen," replied many voices.

"William Tell!" said one of the soldiers; "why it was his kinsman who raised a rabble to insult the ducal bonnet the other night."

"Ay, it was the scapegrace, Philip Tell, who

assailed the cap of our sovereign with stones, till he struck it down," cried another.

"Behold where the young villain stands, with another of the rebel brood in his arms," exclaimed a third, pointing to Philip.

"Hallo, hallo! seize the young traitor, in the name of the emperor and the governor!" shouted a dozen of the Germans, all at once.

"Run, Philip, run—run for your life!" cried a party of his youthful associates.

Philip hastily set his little cousin on his feet, and started off with the speed of the wild chamois of the Alpine mountains; leaving little Henric to shift for himself, as he could.

"The child, the child! the precious babe! he will be trampled to death!" shrieked Lalotte.

Henric had caught sight of his father among the crowd, while Philip was holding him up to look at the ducal cap, and he had been much alarmed lest his father should see him. But the moment he found himself abandoned by Philip, he lifted up his voice, and screamed with all his might, "Father, father! oh dear! oh dear! who will take me to my father?"

The helplessness, the distress, together with the uncommon beauty of the child, moved the heart of a peasant near him, to compassion. "Who is your father, my fair boy?" said he. "Point him out, and I will lead you to him."

"My father is William Tell, the crossbow-man of Bürglen," said the child. "There he is, close to the cap on the pole yonder."

"Is *he* your father, poor babe?" said the peasant. "Well, you will find him in rare trouble, and I hope you may not be the means of adding to it, my little man."

No sooner had the kind peasant cleared the

way through the crowd for his young companion, and conducted him within a few yards of the spot where William Tell stood, than the urchin drew his hand away from his new friend, and running to his father, flung his little arms about his knees, sobbing, "Father, dear father, pray forgive me this once, and I will never disobey you again."

CHAPTER IV.

GESSLER COMMANDS THAT TELL SHALL SHOOT AN APPLE ON THE HEAD OF HIS SON.—THREATENED WITH DEATH FOR REFUSING TO MAKE THE ATTEMPT.—HIS SUCCESSFUL SHOT, AND THE BOY SAVED.—GESSLER THREATENS TO IMPRISON TELL FOR LIFE.—EMBARKED ON THE LAKE.—A STORM.—TELL, BEING PLACED AT THE HELM, RUNS THE VESSEL AGAINST A ROCK, AND ESCAPES.—SHOOTS GESSLER.—JOINS HIS COUNTRYMEN.—THE AUSTRIANS QUIT SWITZERLAND.—TELL ENDS HIS DAYS IN THE BOSOM OF HIS FAMILY.

HENRIC made his appearance at an unlucky moment both for his father and himself; for Gessler, the cruel governor of Uri, exasperated at the manly courage of Tell, seized the boy by the arm, and sternly demanded if he were his son.

"Harm not the child, I pray thee," cried Tell: "he is my first-born."

"It is not my intention to do him harm," replied the governor. "If any mischief befall the child, it will be by thine own hand, traitor. Here," cried he to one of his soldiers, "take this boy, tie him beneath yon linden-tree, in the centre of the market-place, and place an apple on his head——"

"What means this?" cried Tell.

"I am minded to see a specimen of your skill

as an archer," replied Gessler. "I am told that you are the best marksman in all Uri; and, therefore, your life being forfeited by your presumptuous act of disobedience, I am inclined, out of the noble clemency of my nature, to allow you a chance of saving it. This you may do, if you can shoot an arrow so truly aimed as to cleave the apple placed upon thy boy's head. But if thou either miss the apple, or slay the child, then shall the sentence of death be instantly executed."

"Unfeeling tyrant!" exclaimed Tell; "dost thou think that I could endeavour to preserve my own life by risking that of my precious child?"

"Nay," replied Gessler, "I thought I was doing thee a great favour by offering thee an alternative, whereby thou mightest preserve thy forfeited life by a lucky chance."

"A lucky chance!" exclaimed Tell: "and dost thou believe that I would stake my child's life on such a desperate chance as the cast of an arrow launched by the agitated hand of an anxious father, at such a mark as that? Nay, look at the child thyself, my lord. Though he be no kin to thee, and thou knowest none of his pretty ways and winning wiles, whereby he endeareth himself to a parent's heart,—yet consider his innocent countenance, the artless beauty of his features, and the rosy freshness of his rounded cheeks, which are dimpling with joy at the sight of me, though the tears yet hang like rain-drops upon them,—and then say, whether thou couldst find it in thine heart to aim an arrow that, perchance, might harm him?"

"I swear," replied Gessler, "that thou shalt either shoot the arrow, or die!"

"My choice is soon made," said Tell, dropping the bow from his hand. "Let me die!"

"Ay, but the child shall be slain before thy face, ere thine own sentence be executed, traitor!" cried the governor, "if thou shoot not at him."

"Give me the bow once more!" exclaimed Tell, in a hoarse, deep voice; "but in mercy let some one turn the child's face away from me. If I meet the glance of those sweet eyes of his, it will unnerve my hand; and then, perchance, the shaft, on whose true aim his life and mine depend, may err."

Lalotte, knowing that all depended on his remaining quiet, as soon as the soldiers had placed him with his face averted from his father, sprang forward, and whispered in Henric's ear, "Stand firm, dear boy, without moving, for five minutes, and you will be forgiven for your fault of this morning."

There was a sudden pause of awe and expectation among the dense crowd that had gathered round the group planted within a bow-shot of the linden-tree beneath which the child was bound. Tell, whose arms were now released, unbuckled the quiver that was slung across his shoulder, and carefully examined his arrows, one by one. He selected two: one of them he placed in his girdle, the other he fitted to his bow-string; and then he raised his eyes to Heaven, and his lips moved in prayer. He relied not upon his own skill, but he asked the assistance of One in whose hands are the issues of life and death; and he did not ask in vain. The trembling, agitated hand, that a moment before shook with the strong emotion of a parent's anxious fears, became suddenly firm and steady; his swimming eyes resumed their keen, clear sight, and his mind recovered its wonted energy of purpose at the proper moment.

So thrilling was the interest excited among the

spectators, that when he discharged the shaft, the sudden, sharp twang of his bow-string was answered by a general shriek from all the females present, except Lalotte. Her young voice was the first to proclaim aloud, "The arrow hath cleft the apple in twain! and the child is safe."

"God hath sped my shaft, and blessed be his name!" exclaimed the pious archer, on whose ear the thunders of applause, with which the assembled multitude hailed his successful shot, had fallen unheeded.

The soldiers had now unbound the child; and Lalotte fearlessly advanced, and led him to his father. But before the fond parent could fold his darling to his bosom, the tyrant Gessler sternly demanded for what purpose he had reserved the second arrow, which he had seen him select and place in his belt.

"That arrow," replied Tell, giving way to a sudden burst of passion, "that arrow was designed to avenge the death of my child, if I had slain him with the other."

"How to avenge?" exclaimed the governor, furiously. "To avenge, saidst thou? And on whom didst thou intend thy vengeance to fall?"

"On thee, tyrant!" replied Tell, fixing his eyes sternly on the governor. "My next mark would have been thy bosom, had I failed in my first. Thou perceivest that mine is not a shaft to miscarry."

"Well, thou hast spoken frankly," said Gessler; "and since I have promised thee thy life, I will not swerve from my word. But as I have now reason for personal apprehensions from thy malice, I shall closet thee henceforth so safely in the dungeons of Küssnacht, that the light of sun

or moon shall never more visit thine eyes ; and thy fatal bow shall hereafter be harmless."

On this the guard once more laid hands on the intrepid archer, whom they seized and bound, in spite of the entreaties of Lalotte, and the cries and tears of little Henric, who hung weeping about his father.

"Take him home to his mother, Lalotte ; and bear my last fond greetings to her and the little ones, whom I, peradventure, shall see no more," said Tell, bursting into tears. The mighty heart which had remained firm and unshaken in the midst of all his perils and trials, now melted within him at the sight of his infant's tears, the remembrance of his home, and his anticipations of the sufferings of his tender wife.

The inhuman Gessler scarcely permitted his prisoner the satisfaction of a parting embrace with Henric and Lalotte, ere he ordered him to be hurried on board a small vessel, in which he embarked also with his armed followers. He commanded the crew to row to Brunnen, where it was his intention to land, and, passing through the territory of Schwyz, to lodge the captive Tell in the dungeon of Küssnacht, and there to immure him for life.

Tell's famous bow, with the quiver and arrows, which Gessler, who was as blindly superstitious as he was cruel, designed to offer at the shrine of one of the Romish saints, was deposited for safety at the feet of the master-pilot. The sails were hoisted, and the vessel was under weigh, when, suddenly, one of those storms common on the lake of Uri overtook them, accompanied with such violent gusts of wind, that the terrified pilot forsook the helm ; and the bark, with the governor

and his crew, was in danger of being engulfed in the raging waters.

Gessler, like most wicked people, was in great terror at the prospect of death, when one of his attendants reminded him that the prisoner, William Tell, was no less skilful in the management of a boat than in the exercise of the bow. So he ordered that Tell should be unbound, and placed at the helm.

The boat, steered by the master-hand of the intrepid Tell, now kept its course steadily through the mountain surge; and Tell observed, "that, by the grace of God, he trusted a deliverance was at hand."

As the prow of the vessel was driven inland, Tell perceived a solitary table-rock, and called aloud to the rowers to redouble their efforts, till they should have passed the precipice ahead. At the instant they came abreast this point, he snatched his bow from the plank, where it was lying forgotten during the storm, and, turning the helm suddenly towards the rock, he sprang lightly on shore, scaled the mountain, and was out of sight, and beyond reach of pursuit, before any person on board had recovered from his consternation.

Tell, meantime, entered Schwyz; and, having reached the heights which border the main road between Ast and Küssnacht, concealed himself among the brushwood in a small hollow of the road, where he knew Gessler would pass on his way to his own castle, in case he and his followers escaped the peril of the waves, and came safely to shore. This, it appeared, they did, with extreme difficulty; and having effected a landing at Brunnen, they took horse, and proceeded to-

wards Küsnacht, in the direction of the only road to the castle.

While they were passing the spot where Tell lay concealed, he heard the cruel tyrant denouncing the most deadly vengeance, not only on himself, but his helpless family: "If I live to return to Altdorf," he exclaimed, "I will destroy the whole brood of the traitor Tell, mother and children, in the same hour."

"Monster, thou shalt return to Altdorf no more!" murmured Tell. So, raising himself up in his lair, and fitting an arrow to his bow, he took deadly aim at the relentless bosom that was planning the destruction of all his family.

The arrow flew as truly to the mark as that which he had shot in the market-place of Altdorf; and the tyrant Gessler fell from his horse, pierced with a mortal wound.

The daring archer thought that he had taken his aim unseen by human eye; but, to his surprise, a familiar voice whispered in his ear, "Bravo, uncle! that was the best-aimed shaft you ever shot. Gessler is down, and we are a free people now."

"Thou incorrigible varlet, what brings thee here?" replied Tell, in an under-voice, giving Philip a rough gripe of the arm.

"It is not a time to answer questions," returned Philip. "The Grutli band are at Stienen, waiting for thee, if so be thou canst escape from this dangerous place; and my business here was to give thee notice of the same."

On this, Tell softly crept from the thicket, and, followed by his nephew, took the road to Stienen, which, under cover of darkness, they reached that night.

Philip, by the way, after expressing much con-

trition for having seduced little Henric to go to the fair with him, informed his uncle that Henric and Lalotte had been safely conducted home by one of the associate band of the Grutli brothers, who chanced to be at Altdorf fair.

When they reached Stienen, Tell was received with open arms by Stauffacher, the leader of the Grutli band; and with him and the other confederates, he so well concerted measures for the deliverance of Switzerland from the German yoke, that, in the course of a few days, the whole country was in arms. The Emperor of Germany's forces were everywhere defeated; and on the first day of the year, 1308, the independence of Switzerland was declared.

His grateful countrymen would have chosen William Tell for their sovereign, but he nobly rejected the offer, declaring that he was perfectly contented with the station of life in which he was born, and wished to be remembered in history by no other title than that of William Tell, the Deliverer of Switzerland.

This true patriot lived happily in the bosom of his family for many years, and had the satisfaction of seeing his children grow up in the fear of God and the practice of virtue. Henric never forgot the awful consequences of his disobedience in going to Altdorf fair without leave, and ever after became a pattern of filial duty.

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THE WIDOW OF BRUGES.



The Earl of Flanders and Sir Robert Mareschant.



The Earl of Flanders escaping in disguise.

THE WIDOW OF BRUGES.

A TALE OF FLANDERS.

CHAPTER I.

THE CITY OF BRUGES.—DOLPH THE DYKER.—REBELLION OF THE MEN OF GHENT.—A GREAT CANAL COMMENCED.—INSURRECTION OF THE MEN OF GHENT.—ASSASSINATION OF THE DYKERS.—PHILIP ARTAVELDE.

THE ancient and interesting city of Bruges, like many other places in the Low Countries, abounds in dykes and canals, by means of which the communication between different places is carried on, almost in the same manner as by the high-roads in other countries. Over these canals there are, in Bruges, a great many bridges, and indeed, the name of the city itself is derived from the word signifying *bridges*.

In a small hovel, in one of the dark, narrow lanes of this city, dwelt a poor widow with her children. Her name was Mechie, the only name by which she was known; her husband, Dolph, had no surname, but was simply called Dolph the Dyker, from his employment on the dykes and canals of the city.

Dolph used to earn an honest living till the troubles broke out in Flanders. These happened in the year 1380, when the evil-minded men of Ghent rebelled against Earl Lewis of Flanders,

their sovereign; and then came bad times for every one, especially for the labouring classes; for when a country is engaged in civil war, there is an end of all happiness and good order. The rich cannot afford to employ their poor neighbours, nor yet to relieve them when they are sick and in distress.

The once flourishing manufactures, both of Ghent and Bruges, were fast going to decay; the canals and public works were no longer attended to, and everything wore a dismal appearance in these two great cities, which were at one time so rich and prosperous.

The Earl of Flanders removed the seat of government from Ghent to Bruges, because the men of Ghent were fierce and factious, while those of Bruges were loyal and well-disposed to their sovereign. Ghent was, however, much better situated for trade than Bruges, because it has four great navigable rivers, namely, the Lys, the Morwater, the Sheldt, and the Lieve, while Bruges had not one. The burgomasters, or chief citizens, of Bruges proposed to the Earl of Flanders that a company of pioneers, belonging to their city, should dig a great canal from Bruges to Ghent, which should divert the waters of the river Lys from its ancient channel, and enable the people of Bruges to convey their merchandize, in barges, through the navigable streams of the Low Countries. By these means it was thought that the merchants of Bruges would soon get all the trade away from the rebellious citizens of Ghent.

The Earl of Flanders was well pleased with this project, to which he gave his assent; and the company of pioneers set to work, with all the

dykers in Bruges and its neighbourhood, to dig this famous canal.

Dolph set out with the rest, and very happy he was to receive good wages, with a promise of constant employment during this important undertaking, which was expected to produce such a beneficial change for the labouring classes of Bruges. But, alas! they had not proceeded very far in their work, before the men of Ghent rose up, and came in great multitudes to the spot, exclaiming—

“Ha! ha! ye thieves of Bruges! ye have hatched a fine plot to ruin our trade, by stealing the waters of the river Lys from us. But we will spoil your grand canal that ye have commenced digging.” So they began to fill up the trench which the pioneers had opened, and destroyed all their works.

The pioneers and dykers, who were five hundred in number, protested against this outrage, and endeavoured to protect their works with their tools. The men of Ghent, however, who were ten to one in number, and only waited for an excuse to shed blood, fell upon them, and slew them, and buried them in their own trench.

Poor Mechie that night looked out in vain for her husband's return; she had cooked a nice hot supper for him, after she had put the younger children to bed. As she rocked the cradle, in which she was lulling the babe to rest, she cheered her eldest boy and girl, Max and Minna, who were carding wool by the light of the earthen lamp, by telling them that if good times came again, they should each have a garment spun from that wool, against the winter.

The children smiled at this; for winter was drawing near, and their raiment was much worn

So they plied their fingers busily at their industrious employment, till the church clock, in their quarter of the town, struck eight.

"Mother," said Max, "is not the father late to-night?"

"I hope no accident hath befallen him at the canal, which our good earl hath permitted the pioneers' company to dig," said Mechie anxiously; "for surely he ought to have been home ere this."

"Shall I run to the town gates, mother, and ask if the pioneers and dykers are coming?" asked Max.

"Go, my boy," replied Mechie; and Max ran off as hard as he could scamper. Minna sighed, for she was getting tired of carding the wool, and would have liked to go with Max; but her mother said that "It was not a proper hour for girls to be seen in the streets." So Minna resumed her work, though she could not forbear listening to the clattering of Max's wooden shoes, as he ran down the street, till the sound died away in the distance.

It was long before she heard his returning steps. When she did, even her young ear detected the difference between the gay, bounding pace with which he had left his home, and the slow, heavy tread, which denoted that he was the messenger of evil tidings.

Mechie and Minna both hurried into the dark, dismal lane to meet the boy, exclaiming, "What news of the father? what news?"

"Mother, don't be frightened," said Max; "but the watch at the town gate says that something must have happened, or the pioneers would have been home two hours ago."

"Have none of them returned then, my son?"

"None, mother," said the boy; but he looked wistfully at his sister. Minna perceived that his eyes were full of tears, for they had now re-entered their hovel, and the glimmering rays of the lamp fell full upon the pale face of Max.

"Oh, mother, mother," said Minna, "some evil hath befallen the father, I know—only brother Max does not like to tell us."

"Speak out, my boy," said the mother; "it is better that I should know the worst."

"Mother," replied Max, "there is a rumour in the city that the men of Ghent have attacked our pioneers and dykers; and the earl hath sent out a band of soldiers to the canal, to inquire how they have sped."

"Come, my children, we will then go to the gates, that we may get the earliest tidings of the father," said Mechie, eagerly.

Max laid hold of her garments with one hand, and pressing the other on her arm, whispered, "Don't go, mother."

At that moment there was a general outcry in the streets; a shriek, a wail, a dismal lamentation of many female voices, mixed with the shrill cries of infant grief and terror. It was the woful exclamations of the widows and children of those who had been slain at the canal by the men of Ghent. For the soldiers had returned, and brought that doleful news to Bruges.

Mechie would have rushed into the streets to join the other mourners, but her sorrowful children withheld her. They prayed her to think of the babe in the cradle, that had been just awakened by the tumult in the streets, and was crying piteously; and of the four other young children who were sleeping soundly, in spite of the

clamour, on their straw bed, in the miserable little chamber above.

"Alas, my children!" said she, bursting into a passion of tears, "who will provide for you all, if your father has been taken from you?"

"God will take care of us, and of you, too, dear mother," said Max; "only wait patiently till the morning light, and then we will all go down to the works, and see if the father be really among the sufferers."

"Alas, my boy, had it not been so, would he not have returned to us?" said the weeping mother. But neither Dolph the Dyker, nor any one of the five hundred men of Bruges who left the city that morning, full of health and strength, to work at the canal, ever returned to their wives and children again.

The Earl of Flanders ordered his soldiers, the next day, to remove the earth that had been lightly thrown over them by their murderers. They all lay, stiff and cold in their blood, with their tools, in their own canal. Then every widow knew her husband, and every mother her son, though some of them were sadly disfigured by the deadly wounds they had received in their death-fray with the men of Ghent, for they had fought valiantly to defend their works. It was indeed a very wicked deed of the barbarous men of Ghent, to slay so many honest people.

Poor Mechie's husband, Dolph, was among the first that were recognised; for he had defended himself so bravely that he was the last survivor of the pioneers' company, and he had killed several of the assailants, who were buried with him. He was covered with wounds, and all his townsmen lamented for him, as well as his poor widow and children.

The earl said Dolph had died like a hero, and that he would have made a brave soldier. When they told Earl Lewis that poor Dolph had left a widow and seven children, he promised to be a friend to them; but, unfortunately, he had so many troubles of his own, that he soon forgot his promise, and thought no more of Mechie and her seven children.

After the burial service had been read over the general grave of the unfortunate pioneers and dykers, their sorrowful relatives and townspeople returned home. The Earl of Flanders proclaimed the men of Ghent traitors and murderers, and prepared to take signal vengeance upon them, for this barbarous massacre of their fellow-subjects.

Now this Earl of Flanders was neither a good lawgiver, nor a great general. He had spent his time in pleasure and amusements, and knew so little about war, that his rebellious subjects, the men of Ghent, or the Gantois, as they are called in history, obtained the advantage in every battle, and they fought a great many.

The Gantois were commanded by Philip Artavelde, a person of great military talents, and of considerable eloquence. His father, Jacob Artavelde, had been a brewer, and the richest man in Ghent; but having unwittingly given some cause of offence to his turbulent townspeople, they had torn him in pieces, during a popular tumult, some years previous to the present insurrection.

It was somewhat surprising that Philip Artavelde would consent to become the leader of the men who had slain his own father. But when persons are once drawn into a faction, they go on from one thing to another, till they are compelled to act against their own consciences; they then

do just as their party would have them, and consent to crimes which are revolting to justice and humanity.

Philip Artavelde was, by nature, of an enterprising character. Had he been contented to remain in private life, his useful qualities and fine talents might have rendered him a blessing to all around him, and might have procured him an honourable station, if not quite so exalted as that which, in an evil hour for himself and his country, he was induced to accept by the rebel citizens of Ghent.

CHAPTER II.

HORRORS OF CIVIL WAR.—FAMISHING CONDITION OF THE WIDOW AND HER CHILDREN.—THEY APPLY TO THE EARL OF FLANDERS, WHO RELIEVES THEM WITH FOOD AND MONEY.—ARE WAYLAID ON THEIR WAY HOME, AND ROBBED OF THE EARL'S BOUNTY.

THE hostilities between the men of Ghent and the Earl of Flanders having been recommenced by the murder of the poor pioneers and dykers, were now carried on with greater fury than ever, and much blood was shed on either side. Outrages and cruelties were committed by both parties—which is always the case in civil war. There was an end to all security of private property; the rich were ruined, and the poor were destitute of the common necessities of life. Every one was a loser, except some few unprincipled plunderers, who gained by the sufferings of their fellow-creatures.

As for the widow Mechie and her children, they were in very great distress. They had no

one to care for them, or to assist them in earning their bread ; and bread got so dear, that the wool which the children had carded, and Mechie had spun for winter garments, was sold to purchase food ; and even then they had but one scanty meal a-day.

Then sickness, brought on by cold and famine, entered the miserable dwelling ; and the hapless widow had to listen to the cravings of suffering children, whose wants she had no means of supplying. Yet she murmured not, for she knew that the decrees of Heaven were not to be questioned by frail mortals like herself ; and she received comfort in her affliction from the dutiful conduct of Max and Minna, who shared her toils, and worked day and night to earn a trifling pittance, in carding and spinning wool for the clothiers.

Her neighbours were in as much distress as herself, and some of them more so, for they were not equally resigned to the will of God, and their repinings increased their sufferings. Many of them, instead of struggling, with patient fortitude, to make the best of their hard lot, sat down to die in hopeless despair. Funerals became so frequent, that the earl forbade the bells to be tolled, because it increased the dejection of the citizens.

At length the long dismal winter passed away, and spring returned with flowers and blue skies, to bring gladness to the earth once more. But spring brought no joy to the sorrowful city of Bruges. Famine, pestilence, or the sword, had carried death into almost every house there ; and no one ventured to stir without the walls, for fear of the Gantois, who came in plundering parties, up to the very gates, and insulted the partisans of the earl on all occasions.

There was no hope of public peace being restored, for the Gantois were insolent and unreasonable in their demands; and the earl was resolved to make no concessions, but to pursue the war till he had reduced them to submission.

"I wish I were old enough to be a soldier, that I might fight for the earl," said Max one day to his mother.

"I am glad that you are not," replied Mechie; "for it is a dreadful duty when the inhabitants of the same country are opposed to each other in battle."

"But the Gantois killed my father, and so many of our townspeople; should not their deaths be revenged, and all our miseries, withal?" said the boy.

"Hush, hush, my son," replied the meek widow; "is it not written, 'Vengeance is mine, and I will repay it, saith the Lord?' also, 'He who taketh the sword shall perish by the sword?' Doubt not, my boy, that the citizens of Ghent suffer like ourselves. In the time of civil war all parties are wretched; but let us pray that these days of horror may be shortened, and the punishment which, for our national sins, has been laid upon Flanders, may be mitigated."

"Mother," said Minna, "we have finished spinning the wool for Carl Grotius, the clothier."

"Then carry it home, my child; and pray him to let us have a few pounds more to card and spin. Bring me back the money with speed, that we may buy a little oatmeal to make cakes for our dinner," said Mechie.

Minna obeyed her mother; but she returned with a sorrowful countenance.

"Has not Carl Grotius paid thee, my child?" asked Mechie, anxiously.

"Yes," replied Minna, laying a piece of silver before her mother; "here is the money for our work, mother; but make much of it, for it is the last we shall receive."

"How is that, my child?" said Mechie. "Did he find fault with the work?"

"No, my mother. Carl Grotius praised the work—yea, he said it was well done. Yet he told me he could give us no further employment, for his looms are all stopped for the lack of trade. No one can afford to buy woollen cloths now, in this miserable city; and no merchants will come into Flanders now, to purchase our manufactures, for fear of being plundered by the Gantois. But he says they are as badly off as we are, for they get no market for their gloves, and the people are starving there as well as here."

"Alack, my child, that is always the case in times of tumult and rebellion," replied Mechie; "and then the working hands suffer for the crimes of those who first incited them to disturb the public peace."

"But, mother, since we can get no more work, shall we not perish of hunger?" asked Hans, another of the boys.

"He who feedeth the young ravens when they call upon Him, will not suffer us to perish, my son," replied the pious widow. "Our prayer for daily bread hath been answered hitherto. Lo, here is sufficient for the day, and let us trust in God for the morrow's provision."

She then gave Minna money to buy the meal, and also to Max to purchase fire-wood. While the boy kindled a fire on the hearth, she kneaded the flat cakes, such as the Flemish peasants eat, and afterwards baked them on the hearth, and divided one of them among her children and her-

self, in equal portions, and laid the rest by, for she knew there was great occasion to be sparing. But with all Mechie's care and frugality, the cakes wasted, and the meal was soon exhausted; and the day came when, in reply to her children's demand for food, she was compelled to say, "I have none to give you."

"But we have had no breakfast," said Hans.

"Nor dinner either," sobbed Lenchie.

"And it is now nearly bed-time," said Anchie.

"Will you not give us some supper, mother?" cried little Dolph; "we are so very hungry to-day."

"Hush, Dolph," said Max; "mother has eaten no food herself to-day."

"Nor yesterday either," said Minna. "She would not eat, that she might save her cake for baby Fritz."

"But I am quite as hungry as Fritz," said Dolph, casting a greedy eye on the morsel with which the weeping mother was feeding her famishing babe.

The tender heart of the sorrowful mother could bear no more. As soon as her poor baby had eaten the coveted morsel, which, in her self-devoted love, she had saved for him from her own scanty share of the yesterday's meal, she rose up, and, taking an empty trencher from the shelf, said to her other children, "Follow me. We will go to the gate of the earl's palace, and ask him for food."

The Earl of Flanders was a compassionate disposition, and felt deeply for the miseries to which the people of Bruges were exposed in consequence of the disastrous war with his rebellious Gantois subjects. He daily gave alms at his palace-gate; but he was not able to give so much as he wished to do, having lost the principal part of his reve-

nues through the revolt at Ghent, and the decay of trade at the loyal city of Bruges.

The widow Mechie, and her children, had not stood long before the palace-gate, when the earl returned from reviewing his troops, for he was marshalling a great army, with the intention of giving battle to Philip Artavelde.

The earl's attendants were very angry when they saw Mechie and her children standing in the way, and they cried out,—“Room for the earl! room for the earl! Why do you stand at the gate at this hour, woman?”

“I and my children are starving, and we have come to ask alms of our good earl,” replied Mechie, holding up her empty plate.

“Morning is the time for alms-giving,” returned the officer of the guard, sharply. “If you come then, you will have your share of the earl's charity, but he cannot be pestered with beggars all day long.”

“But neither my children nor myself have had a morsel of food all day,” said she; “and, before morning, some of them may die of hunger.”

Then the earl, who was mounted on a noble charger, rode up, and, reining in his steed, exclaimed,—“What is all this about? Is there any person in my service who would drive a starving mother and her hungry babes from my gates?”

Then Mechie threw herself at her sovereign's feet, and holding up her empty trencher, said—

“Noble earl, give me food for my starving children! We have not broken our fast all day.”

“Where is your husband?” said the earl.

“My lord, I have no husband,” replied Mechie. “I am the widow of your highness's poor servant, Dolph the Dyker, who, woe to the day! was slain by the men of Ghent in defending the works at

the canal. You graciously promised to be a friend to us all, in the hour when you looked upon his dead body, and perceived, by the token of his numerous wounds, how bravely he had withstood the traitors of Ghent—yet, behold, we are perishing of hunger.”

“Thou shalt be fed then, and thy children, from mine own table to-day,” said the earl. Dismounting from his horse, he took a child in each hand, and led them into the palace, followed by Mechie and the rest of her famished children; while the crowd, which had gathered without, shouted—“Long life to our noble Earl Lewis, the friend of the widow and the orphans! Death to the traitors of Ghent, who refuse to obey our earl!”

The earl placed the widow Mechie, and her children, at the table which had been spread for himself, and refused to sup till they had all eaten and drank. He then gave the widow a handful of money, and told her to come every day to the palace for food.

Mechie and her children now thought themselves very happy indeed; but as they returned to their own dark lane, a wicked man, who had seen them enter the palace with the earl, and suspected that he had bestowed his bounty upon them, followed them secretly. When they came to a lonely spot between two high walls, he attacked the poor widow, and took from her by violence all the money the earl had given her, and inflicted a severe blow on Max, who had vainly endeavoured to defend his mother, by pommelling the ruffian with his fists, and calling for help.

Thus the short-lived joy of the unfortunate mother and her children was changed into sorrow and disappointment. The little ones, who were

sadly frightened, raised a chorus of lamentations, and they all went crying home to the dismal hovel once more.

"Be comforted, my children," said Mechie, "and remember that you have been well fed. The wicked robber has taken away the money which our gracious earl had given me, it is true; but he could not deprive any of us of the good supper we have eaten, so let us be contented with that, and go to bed thankfully. We now know some of the troubles that attend upon riches."

CHAPTER III.

MECHIE SUSPECTED OF BEING AN IMPOSTOR, BUT IS AGAIN RELIEVED BY THE EARL.—THE WHITE-HOODS.—THE EARL RAISES AN ARMY.—IS DEFEATED IN A GREAT BATTLE WITH THE GANTOIS.—RETREATS TO BRUGES.—ONE OF THE CITY GATES OPENED BY A TRAITOR.—PERIL OF THE EARL.—HE SEEKS SAFETY IN FLIGHT.

THE next day the children demanded food of their mother. Mechie had no other resource than to take her empty trencher as before, and beg at the palace-gate for alms. When Earl Lewis came out with his almoner, as usual, to relieve the suppliants, he appeared surprised at seeing Mechie there again with her empty plate, and said—"Woman, have you already expended all the money I gave you yesterday?"

"No, my gracious lord," replied Mechie, "I have not spent any part of it; but a wicked robber took it from me by violence, as I was returning to mine own dwelling."

Now the earl had been often imposed upon with false stories by those who came to ask at his

palace-gate. He did not believe Mechie's tale; so, regarding her with a stern countenance, he said, "I see more honest people in distress than I have the means of relieving; and I do not think it right to encourage those whom I suspect of being impostors."

"Indeed, my good lord," replied Mechie, bursting into tears, "I am no impostor, but a true woman. Behold how the barbarous villain hath used my son, Max, who strove to resist his lawless attempt to deprive me of your highness's bounty."

"I cannot imagine how a robber should suppose that a person of your appearance could be in possession of anything for which it would be worth his while to attack you," said the earl.

"My good lord, the robber, doubtless, had been a witness of your gracious conduct in taking me and my poor babes into your palace, and, peradventure, he deemed that I had been partaker of your royal bounty in the way of money as well as of food," replied the widow.

"Woman," rejoined the earl, "it may be as you say; and yet I am so frequently imposed upon, that it makes me suspicious. Nevertheless, for the sake of your dead husband, and your helpless children, who, I perceive, are half-starved, I will order your trencher to be filled with victuals; but as for money, I have not enough to give to one who takes so little care of it."

"My gracious lord," replied Mechie, "I never asked you for money; and if I could obtain work for myself and my children, so that we might earn our daily bread, I would not come to the palace-gate to beg for food. But we shall be humbly thankful for whatsoever your highness shall be pleased to bestow upon us."

So the earl ordered her trencher to be filled with provisions from his kitchen; and she and her children went home rejoicing that they had got food for another day.

Mechie, however, had been deeply hurt by the suspicions of the earl, as to the truth of her story about the robber. She would fain have left the city of Bruges, to seek employment; but whither could she go? The whole of Flanders was in an unsettled state, and the "White-Hoods," as those who sided with the Gantois were called, (a white hood being the badge worn by the revolutionary party,) becoming every day more numerous, the timorous widow dreaded to trust her helpless family in their neighbourhood, even had there been a probability of bettering her condition by so doing. But the White-Hoods chiefly subsisted on plunder; and the peaceably disposed peasants and burghers of the other towns and cities of Flanders were quite as badly off as the people of Bruges. So Mechie had no other resource than the alms of the Earl of Flanders, and she daily presented herself at the palace-gate to receive them.

These alms became gradually less liberal; for the earl's means were more and more circumscribed as the distress of his poor pensioners increased. At length, a very small slice of black bread was all that could be accorded to each suppliant; and it began to be whispered, that even this inadequate relief must soon be withdrawn.

The earl had coined all his plate into money, and pawned his regalia, or state-jewels, to maintain the expenses of the war with Ghent. He had also borrowed large sums of the King of France and other sovereigns, with which he had

got together an army of forty thousand men, who were mostly mercenaries, or hired soldiers from foreign parts. With these, on the 3d of May, 1382, he marched to Ghent, to give battle to Philip Artavelde, the commander of the White-Hoods, who were then reduced by war, famine, and pestilence, to the comparatively small number of five thousand, whom the earl supposed he should be able wholly to annihilate with his mighty army. But the race is not always to the swift nor the battle to the strong; and the Almighty Disposer of all earthly events had ordered matters very differently from the earl's calculations.

On the eve of the battle, Philip Artavelde addressed his little army in a speech, wherein he recommended them not to be discouraged by the superior force of the Earl of Flanders and his hireling troops. When the battle joined, with resistless valour, they bore down everything before them.

The earl's foremost lines were broken by the furious charge of the Gantois. The foreign mercenaries fled or threw down their arms, and called for quarter, which put the Flemish troops into disorder. The earl attempted in vain to rally them; his plans were all disarranged; the rout became general; and so tremendous a slaughter ensued, that although the battle did not begin till after sunset, the whole of the forty thousand men, by nightfall, were either dispersed or slain by the victorious Gantois. The earl himself with difficulty escaped, with his banner, and about forty of his bravest followers, to Bruges, whither he was pursued to the very gates by the rebel army of Philip Artavelde.

When the earl had entered the city, he ordered

the gates to be shut, and that every person who was capable of bearing arms should assemble in the market-place. But the people were panic-stricken, and hesitated to obey the summons of their sovereign.

There were many factious persons in the town, too, who did all they could to persuade the citizens that the miseries which had fallen upon them in consequence of the war with Ghent, had been caused by the bad government of the earl. They now openly urged the people to put on white hoods like the Gantois, and expel the earl from their city. But the men of Bruges declared that they would not forsake their sovereign to join the rebels; on which the traitors, finding they could not prevail on their fellow-citizens to break their oaths of allegiance to the earl, privately opened one of the city gates, and admitted the victorious Gantois into Bruges.

The earl of Flanders, not suspecting this treachery, and being much fatigued, and slightly wounded in the battle, had retired into the palace to have his hurt dressed, to take some needful refreshment, and to exchange his heavy coat of mail (which had been bruised and dented in by the blows of his fierce assailants), for a lighter suit. Scarcely had he done this, when he heard a tremendous clamour of a conflicting multitude raging in the streets below, and immediately sallied forth to ascertain the cause of the tumult, surrounded by his attendants, bearing torches. It was now dark as midnight—so dark that, without lights, no man might know his brother; and mounting his charger, he rode through the palace-gate, shouting, "Flanders for the lion—Flanders for the earl!"

The lion was the earl's banner, which was

borne before him in battle and at solemn processions; and the war-cry of the Flemings was, "Flanders for the lion—Flanders for the earl!" The sovereign now used it to raise the drooping spirits of his followers, who had been greatly disheartened by their late defeat.

"Whist! whist! my lord," cried Sir Robert Mareschant, one of the earl's knights, who had come in search of his sovereign. "This is no time to peal the battle word of Flanders. Some traitor hath opened one of the gates to the rebels of Ghent, and the town is full of the White-Hoods."

"Then let us drive them out again," cried the earl, setting spurs to his horse.

"It is impossible to do that," returned Sir Robert, laying hands on the charger's bridle-rein.

"You have no force to renew the battle here. The Gantois are drawn up in the great square, in good order; and they have already guarded all the principal streets, in hopes of taking you. A party of them will be here presently; so your best plan will be to extinguish the torches, and flee into some of the back lanes or alleys, where, peradventure, you may be able to conceal yourself."

"Put out the lights, then," said the earl, "and let every man shift for himself."

The order was promptly obeyed; for they heard the shout of the Gantois close behind; and, even when the torches were extinguished, they could see the gleam of the white hoods, and the flash of steel, through the profound darkness.

"Save yourself, my lord!" whispered his squire. "The Gantois are upon us. You had

better dismount and flee on foot, or the clattering of the horse's hoofs will betray you."

The earl obeyed the counsel of his faithful servant, and quitting his horse, fled down one of the by-streets.

"My lord," said the squire, who kept as close to him as he could, "the gold embroidery of your mantle, and the jewels on your collar, glitter whenever you pass a window where there is a light. You had better change clothes with me; for you will find more security in my plain equipments than in your gilded and emblazoned robes."

CHAPTER IV.

THE EARL OF FLANDERS TAKES REFUGE IN THE WIDOW'S COTTAGE.

—CONCEALS HIMSELF IN BED AMONG THE CHILDREN.—IS TRACKED BY THE WHITE-HOODS, BUT ESCAPES DETECTION.—DISGUISES HIMSELF, AND PROCEEDS ON FOOT TOWARDS LISLE.—FALLS IN WITH SOME OF HIS ADHERENTS.—THE KING OF FRANCE DEFEATS THE MEN OF GHENT, AND RESTORES THE EARL, WHO LIBERALLY REWARDS THE WIDOW OF BRUGES.

THE earl entered a dark court, stripped himself of his perilous attire, and put on the humbler suit of his squire. They had been, however, tracked by a party of the White-Hoods, who, deceived by the royal robes of Flanders, which the squire had just thrown about him, shouted—

"Hurrah! hurrah! we have taken the earl! The lion is clutched who would have devoured the men of Ghent!"

The earl took advantage of this mistake, to flee with precipitation from the spot; but the

White-Hoods presently detected the counterfeit, and the pursuit was renewed with eager alacrity.

The earl, meanwhile, who was familiar with every nook and winding of the city, for some time was enabled to baffle the chase of those who were panting to shed his blood; but in every street, lane, and alley, he encountered fresh pursuers. The hue and cry was at his heels, and having had such fearful proof of the treachery of some of the citizens of Bruges that evening, he was afraid of entering any house, lest he should put himself into the power of those who would betray him. A party of the White-Hoods, with lighted torches, had hunted him into the long dark lane where the widow Mechie dwelt, and he could perceive another group of them, without lights, watching at the other end of the lane.

The earl was now under a high dead wall, that offered no facility of concealment or retreat; but opposite was a row of miserable mud hovels. All was darkness and desolation in these, except a feeble stream of light that glimmered through the broken lattice of that wherein the widow Mechie was watching over the cradle, where one of her sick children was lying, while she lulled her wailing infant on her knee. Minna was kneeling by her mother's side, and endeavouring to feed the flickering flame on the hearth, with fragments of sticks and straws, which she had been permitted to gather up from the floor of a neighbouring merchant's warehouse; and she was boiling a handful of musty flour, that had also been given her there, into gruel, for the sick children.

Max, whom boyish curiosity had led into the street, to learn the cause of the clamour, rushed in, pale and agitated, exclaiming—

"Mother, the men of Ghent have taken the city! every street is full of the White-Hoods!"

"Then they will come here and murder us, as they did the poor father," cried Minna.

"No, no, my child; there is no cause of alarm for us," said her mother. "We are too poor, too miserable, to tempt such visitors."

"But hark! I hear them in the lane," whispered Minna, clinging to her mother.

The door burst open as she spake, and the Earl of Flanders rushed into the hovel, exclaiming—"Woman, save me from my pursuers!"

Mechie recognised her disguised sovereign; for how could she forget the face of him who had preserved her children from perishing of hunger? She rose from her seat, and pointing to a rude ladder, which led to the miserable little chamber, where three of her little children lay upon a truckle bed, she said—"Conceal yourself, my lord, in that bed with my children: it is the only hiding-place I have."

The earl hastened to ascend the ladder, and crept under the wretched coverlid among the straw, with Mechie's children. They murmured, with sleepy voices, at the intrusion; and Hans grumbled out—"You grow so big, Max, you take up more room than your share of the bed. There now, you will push poor Lenchie and me quite out, you great rude thing!"

The earl dared not speak, lest his voice should betray him; but he made more room by taking the youngest child, Dolph, into his arms, and stifling with a caress the shrill cry the urchin was prepared to utter.

"Brother Max has come to bed in his clothes," lisped little Lenchie, laying her head on her sovereign's shoulder, and nestling once more to re-

pose. In another moment the other two were wrapt once more in the profound slumbers of infant innocence, unconscious of the agitation and terror which shook the powerful frame of their illustrious bedfellow.

The door of the hovel was again opened, not by the cautious hand of a doubtful fugitive, but rudely flung back upon its crazy hinges by a group of fierce Gantois, in their white hoods, in pursuit of the earl. They entered with drawn swords and blazing torches, exclaiming—"Woman, where is the man who entered your house just now?"

Mechie, who was sitting by the dying embers of the hearth, apparently intent on lulling her sick infant to sleep, looked up, and feigning surprise at the question, replied—"Have a care, my masters, that ye fright not my poor dying babe with your noise. What man do you mean?"

"The Earl of Flanders, you old crone!" exclaimed one of the intruders; "you shall have a noble reward if you will show us where you have hidden him; and if you will not show us, we will slay you on your own hearth-stone."

"Alack! alack!" replied Mechie, "what should a poor wretched widow, like me, do with the mighty Earl of Flanders?"

"We saw the light flash from within, when he opened your door," returned another of the White-Hoods.

"Nay, then, my masters," said Mechie, "why not look for him? My house is not so large, that it will take up much of your time to search it. I wot, that even a little mouse would be cunning to find a hiding-place in any corner here, to say nothing of a great earl."

Then one of the men took a torch, and mount-

ing the ladder, thrust his head into the narrow door-way of the chamber. Looking round, he saw nothing but the wretched straw pallet, which appeared to him full of children sound asleep; for the earl had crept beneath the coverlid, quite under his little bedfellows.

"There is no one here," cried the man, "only a parcel of children, lying as thick together as pigs in a litter of straw. Come, let us away; we are only wasting time here." They then departed; and the earl lifted up both heart and voice in thanks to God, for his wonderful preservation from this great peril.

This was late on the Saturday night. The day had been a doleful one to him; but, notwithstanding his late fatigue, alarm, and distress of mind, the presence of foes in the city, and the company of three strange bedfellows, who shared his humble couch of straw, his weary eyes soon closed. He slept as soundly in the mud-hovel of the indigent widow, Mechie, as if he had lain on a down bed, beneath a canopy of state, in one of the lofty chambers of his own palace.

The next morning he was awakened by little hands pulling and patting him. He heard, below, the wailing of the sick infant, and the pious widow singing her Sabbath-morning hymn, with Max and Minna. He then recollected his last night's adventure. Rising from his rude couch, he descended the ladder, and joined the widow and her elder children.

"And who art thou," said he, addressing Mechie, "whose generous fidelity has preserved the life of thy sovereign?"

"I am the widow of poor Dolph the Dyker," she replied. "You once fed me and my starving children at your own table, my lord, and after

wards doubted my word, when I told you that a robber had deprived me of the alms you then generously bestowed upon me."

"Oh! woman, woman!" replied the earl, "thou hast nobly proved thy faithfulness and truth." Then he offered her his purse, which was full of crowns of gold; but Mechie would only take the smallest piece of silver, to purchase food for her illustrious guest and her own family.

"Gold would betray us, my lord," she observed; "for people would naturally question how it came into my possession."

The Earl of Flanders kept a better Sabbath that day than he had spent for a long time before; for he joined in prayer with the pious widow and her little family, with unfeigned devotion, beneath the humble roof of one of the poorest of his subjects.

His continuance there was perilous; for the White-Hoods kept possession of Bruges, and were making diligent search for him everywhere, as Max, who went constantly out to gain intelligence, brought him word. Therefore, it was very necessary that he should make his escape to Lisle, if it were possible.

On the Sunday night, when it was dark, he arrayed himself in the jerkin, and marsh-boots, in which poor Dolph used to work at the canals. He thus got safely out of town; but having never before travelled on foot, or without attendants, he soon became perplexed, and wandered about till he came to a large thorn-bush, where, hearing approaching footsteps, he concealed himself, and presently heard the voice of one of his faithful knights, that same Sir Robert Mareschant who had warned him of the White-Hoods having entered Bruges.

Sir Robert, who had, it should seem, a habit of talking to himself, was just saying, as he passed the hawthorn-bush, "Where can my lord, the earl, have hidden himself? Now would I give my golden spurs to him who should tell me truly that he is safely out of yon city."

"Ah, Robert, Robert!" cried the earl, "have a care, that I claim not the spurs; for I can tell thee, from the best authority, that Earl Lewis of Flanders is safely out of Bruges."

"Oh, my dear lord!" exclaimed Sir Robert Mareschant, who recognised the voice of his sovereign; "how is it that you have been so fortunate as to escape?"

"This is no time or place to tell adventures," replied the earl. "Get me a horse, if you can, for I am weary of walking. And, in the mean time, let us take the road to Lisle, if thou knowest it."

Sir Robert Mareschant was well acquainted with the road; but they had to walk all night, many a mile through wet and weary paths, before they met with a horse, and then it proved to be a blind mare, belonging to a poor peasant. Bad as it was, the earl was glad enough to mount the sorry jade; and, without either saddle or bridle, he travelled the whole of Monday, and rested not till he reached the Castle of Lisle, where he found many of his knights and nobles, who had escaped from Bruges, and were rejoiced to see him alive and well.

The King of France brought a fine army to his assistance, and, attacking the Gantois, defeated them with great slaughter, and killed their general, Philip Artavelde, who had had reason enough to repent having anything to do with the faction of

the White-Hoods; for they treated him very ungratefully.

When Earl Lewis of Flanders returned to Bruges, he nobly rewarded the widow Mechie, his faithful preserver, and gave her a handsome house, and comfortable estate, where she lived happily with her children, long after his death, which happened, very suddenly, in the year 1383

QUEEN MARGARET.



Queen Margaret presenting her Infant to the King.



The Queen of Scotland receiving Queen Margaret.

TO THE

MEMBERS OF THE

QUEEN MARGARET.

A STORY OF THE WARS OF YORK AND LANCASTER.

CHAPTER I.

HENRY THE SIXTH AND QUEEN MARGARET.—BIRTH OF THE PRINCE OF WALES.—THE WHITE AND RED ROSES.—DEFECTION OF RICHARD, DUKE OF YORK.—BATTLE OF NORTHAMPTON.—DEFEAT OF THE LANCASTRIANS, AND CAPTURE OF KING HENRY

QUEEN MARGARET, who is generally called in history Margaret of Anjou, was the wife of Henry the Sixth of England—that good, but unfortunate King Henry, who founded Eton College, for the encouragement of learning among his young subjects.

This king and queen were for many years childless; but at last, a son, Edward, Prince of Wales, was born to them, in the year 1453. The birth of this prince happened in a time of trouble; for it was in the beginning of a civil war, and during the period of King Henry's severe sickness, which lasted for many months.

A very pretty letter has been preserved, written by a gentleman of King Henry's court to one of his relations in the country. The writer says:—"When the king recovered from his malady, he recollected nothing that had happened to him during the time of his sickness; and when they told him that God had given him a fair young

son, he expressed great joy, and desired to see the child. When the queen brought my lord prince, who was only a babe of ten months old, to show him to his royal father, the king took the lovely child in his arms, and blessed him. Then he asked what they had named him; and when they told him the prince was named Edward, he lifted up his hands and eyes, and thanked God that this child had been given a name which was so dear to the English people, having been borne by the best and greatest of our kings."

King Henry and Queen Margaret never had any other child beside the Prince Edward. He was a child of singular beauty and rare endowments, and was, of course, most tenderly beloved by them both; but his birth was the cause of great discontent to Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York, King Henry's cousin, who was considered by some people to have had a better right to the crown than King Henry himself.

The matter stood thus. King Henry was descended from the son of the fourth son of Edward the Third; and the Duke of York from the only daughter of the third son of that monarch: his second son died an infant. When Edward the Third died, he was succeeded by his grandson, Richard the Second, who was the only surviving child of his eldest son, Edward, Prince of Wales, surnamed the Black Prince, who is so famous in history. Richard the Second had no children; and being a weak, worthless sovereign, was dethroned by his subjects, who chose Henry, Duke of Lancaster, his cousin, to be king, in his stead, and in preference to the grandson of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, the third son of Edward the Third, who was the next heir to the throne in the regular line of succession.

Henry, Duke of Lancaster, reigned thirteen years over England, under the title of Henry the Fourth. His son, the renowned Henry the Fifth, the conqueror of France, succeeded him; and died, after a short but glorious reign, in the year 1422, leaving his son, Henry the Sixth, an infant of only a few months old. This race of kings was called the line of Lancaster.

Henry the Sixth was crowned, in the church of Notre Dame, in Paris, King of France and England, when only nine months old. He would have been better suited for the quiet scenes of private life than for the perilous distinction of royalty; for he was a most amiable and easy-tempered person, and his pleasures consisted in the pursuit of learning and devotional exercises. While Henry had no children, the Duke of York, his cousin, was contented to waive his claims to the throne, King Henry being of a sickly constitution, and subject to sudden attacks of illness, which were likely to end in an early death; in which case, the Duke of York, being the next heir, expected to succeed him, as a matter of course. But when the young Prince of Wales was born, the Duke of York raised a rebellion against King Henry, whom he defeated and took prisoner at the battle of St. Alban's, May 31, 1453.

At this battle, the friends of King Henry wore red roses in their caps, those of the Duke of York white roses. The red and white roses henceforth became the badges of the rival factions of York and Lancaster, into which the kingdom of England was divided.

King Henry was so shocked at the scene of slaughter he had just witnessed, that he besought the Duke of York to restore peace on any terms;

and the Duke of York insisted on such conditions as would have the effect of excluding the infant Prince of Wales from the throne, in his own favour. He permitted Henry, it is true, to retain the name of King of England while he lived; but he called himself the protector of the realm, and exercised all the royal power himself.

This was very displeasing to Queen Margaret, who reproached King Henry for consenting to terms so injurious to the interests of his only son. She soon after began to concert measures with the Duke of Somerset, and other powerful adherents of the Red Rose, for breaking a treaty, the object of which was to disinherit this beloved child.

King Henry was very reluctant to sanction any proceedings of his own party which were likely to plunge the kingdom once more into the horrors of civil war. But the queen would have her way in this, as in everything else, though it was nearly seven years before she could bring matters into a proper train for counteracting the ambitious plans of the Duke of York. At length she prevailed upon King Henry to leave London, which was in the Duke of York's interest, and to proceed with herself and the young prince into the midland counties, which were loyally disposed to the Lancastrian cause.

On this, the Duke of York's eldest son, Edward, Earl of March, assisted by his cousin, the Earl of Warwick, who was one of the richest and most powerful noblemen of that age, raised an army of five-and-twenty thousand men, with which they marched to attack the royal forces at Northampton. On the 19th of July, 1460, the rival armies met; and though in the very height of summer, there was incessant rain. It was a day of intense anxiety for Queen Margaret; for she felt that t

destinies, perhaps the lives, of her royal husband and her son depended upon its issue.

When the white-rose crests of the Yorkist soldiers first appeared in sight, the queen, after having arranged the plan of the battle with the Duke of Somerset, who was to command the army of the Red Rose, entered King Henry's tent, and urged him to arm and appear in the field, that the sight of their sovereign might encourage the troops of Lancaster. But the king replied, "I am a man of peace; and my desire is to serve God, and to live in charity with my neighbour, according to the divine precepts of our holy religion. How, then, can I go into battle, and shed the blood of my fellow-creatures?"

"I do not require thee to strike a single stroke in the field this day," exclaimed the queen. "All I ask of thee is, to show thyself to the men-at-arms, that they may fight valiantly in thy quarrel."

"Yes," replied the king, "and to beseech them to slay their brothers, their neighbours, or, it may be, their own fathers, or sons, for a matter which is verily no business of theirs! No, no, my loving queen; I will have naught to do with spiriting up my subjects to kill each other before my face. I had enough of that woful work on that dismal day of red St. Alban's, where I had the grief of beholding the blood of Christian men, (or those who called themselves such,) nobles, knights, and commoners, poured forth like water. I had an arrow shot into mine own neck withal, which was no pleasant companion, believe me, and was glad to surrender myself into the hands of my adversary, Richard of York, that I might get it drawn forth, and prevail upon him to put an end to the slaughter of my poor friends, which was the saddest sight these eyes did ever see."

"But, royal father, why did you not kill the traitor York, for slaying your brave friends?" asked the young Prince of Wales, who was standing at his father's knee, busily employed in twisting a half-blown rose into his velvet cap of state, which was surmounted with his threefold plume.

"Nay, my boy," replied the king, "I was much beholden to my cousin York's kindness, in not slaying me, as he might have done, had he been murderously disposed. I was in no condition to punish him for his rebellious conduct; and it is but justice to the valiant duke to say, that he used me with all the courtesy and respect that were due from a subject to his sovereign."

"Ay," observed the queen, "it was good policy in the traitor-duke to do that, since he thereby cajoled you into signing a treaty, the object of which was to deprive your only son of his royal heritage, the crown of England."

"A woful heritage it is," replied King Henry. "Ah! Edward, my sweet son, take warning by thy father's misery, and never wish to be a king."

"But I do wish to be a king!" exclaimed the boy. "My grandsire, Henry the Fifth, of glorious memory, was a mighty king, and I want to be like him, that minstrels may sing of my fame, and the chronicles of England may be full of my deeds."

"And what knowest thou of chronicles, my little prating boy?" asked the king, smiling at the lofty tone of his son.

"You take me for a baby now, my royal lord," replied the prince, "and seem surprised that I take delight in other things than toys. But I have read of the olden time, with my tutor, Sir John Fortescue; and we are now reading, in the chronicles of Sir John Froissart, of the mighty

deeds of Edward the Black Prince, who won the battle of Cressy when he was only eighteen years of age. I wish you would let me put on a shirt of mail, instead of these foolish velvet gauds and golden trappings, and mount your great charger, Rowland; and so lead on your merry men to win as good a victory at Northampton, as the Black Prince did at Cressy."

"Alack!" replied the king, "the vessels that carry the strongest press of sail are soonest wrecked in the stormy seas; and that, I fear, will be the fate of my bold boy. You have taught him to aspire too highly, Margaret, and that portends a fall."

Here the Duke of Somerset, who was the king's cousin, presented himself at the door of the royal tent, sheathed in his armour of proof, exclaiming, "My liege, the battle is about to join, and you still linger in your pavilion!"

"I shall not stir from hence," said the king.

"Not stir from hence!" cried the queen. "Fie, fie! for shame! and who is to fight your battle, Henry?"

"Those that delight in such amusements. I hold the shedding of blood to be a deadly sin, and will have no hand in it."

"Then we must do the best we can without you. But what will you do here?"

"I shall employ myself in prayer, that God will be pleased to assuage the murderous wrath of my foes, and restore peace to my divided realm; so that all parties may unite to serve Him in spirit and in truth," replied the king.

"Then I will ride forth with Somerset, and encourage the troops myself," said the queen.

"And take me with you, mother," cried the prince, "that we may all unite in confounding the

rebels of the White Rose. Oh that the sun would but shine upon this day for us !”

But the sun never looked out all that day ; and when the battle joined, torrents of rain beat full in the faces of the Lancastrian soldiers, so that the archers could not see to take aim. King Henry’s cannon, too, were unskilfully planted ; and the wet having been permitted to soak the powder, they could not act. It was therefore to little purpose that Queen Margaret, with her son, rode from rank to rank to encourage the troops to fight manfully for King Henry.

They did their best, in spite of these great disadvantages ; and fiercely did they contest the ground, till the treacherous Lord Grey de Ruthin, with the wing of the army he commanded, turned the fortune of the day against Lancaster, by deserting to the foe. This was about seven o’clock in the evening ; and the cry was, “ Let every man shift for himself !” Then the victorious Earl of March, the Duke of York’s eldest son, who was afterwards King Edward the Fourth, alighted from his battle charger, shouting to his followers, “ Kill the nobles and captains of the army of Lancaster, but spare the common soldiers !”

This rendered the case of all persons of distinction in King Henry’s army more desperate than it would have been under other circumstances. Some of the men turned upon their own leaders and slew them, that they might obtain rewards by carrying their heads to the victor, but many remained faithful, through life and death, to the cause of Lancaster. “ Ten thousand tall men,” says the chronicler Hall, “ were drowned in attempting to pass the river Nen,” which was swollen and flooded by the recent rains ; and these fatal waters were dyed red with the blood of the

slain who fell on both sides, on that dreadful day.

King Henry was found sitting, desolate and lonely, in his tent, with his *Breviary*, or book of devotions, in his hand, lost in dismay at the fearful uproar of the fight, yet quite unconscious which party had gained the victory, till he saw himself surrounded by the nobles who espoused the cause of York. The Earl of Warwick, stepping forward, called upon him to surrender himself a prisoner. King Henry had neither the power nor the inclination to offer resistance; so he meekly resigned himself to the will of his victorious foes.

CHAPTER II.

THE DUKE OF SOMERSET ADVISES THE QUEEN TO FLY.—SHE PROCEEDS WITH A SMALL ESCORT.—THEY REST AT A CONVENT.—ARE RELIEVED AT LORD CLIFFORD'S CASTLE.—SPURNED BY MANY OF THE PEOPLE.—REWARDS OFFERED FOR THEIR ARREST.—THE QUEEN DESERTED BY HER ESCORT.—DANGER OF TRAVELLING.

MEANTIME, Queen Margaret with her son, and a few attendants, remained on a rising ground, which commanded a prospect of the disastrous plain whereon she had witnessed the overthrow of the cause of Lancaster. At length the Duke of Somerset, with his armour splashed with mire, and stained with blood, rode hastily up to her, exclaiming, "Fly, madam! fly with me! if you value your own life, and that of the young prince, the only hope of Lancaster."

"Is all lost, then?" demanded she, clasping her hands in anguish.

"All, all!" he replied. "The king is taken, and our faithful friends are slain or captive. Put your horse to its speed, royal Margaret; for there is, by this time, a price upon all our heads. Can my lord, the prince, ride at horseman's speed, or shall my squire take him behind him for better security?"

"No, indeed," replied the prince; "I can ride as fairly, and as swiftly, too, as any of my father's knights; ay, and keep up my paces withal. I will have a horse to myself, lord duke."

"And so thou shalt, my gallant boy," cried the queen; "but ride close to my bridle-rein, Edward, I charge thee."

"So I will," rejoined the prince, "that I may have the better care of thee, my royal mother, in case of the starting or stumbling of thy steed."

"Away, away!" cried the Duke of Somerset, impatiently. "There is no time to listen to the boastful prating of baby-boys, be they whom they may; for life is at stake with us all."

Twenty trusty men-at-arms had been stationed on the spot to which the queen and the Prince of Wales had retreated, when the battle appeared likely to go against the Lancastrians. They had the queen's jewels and plate, with many other articles of value, safely packed up, to convey to some place of security, in case the fortune of the day should decide in favour of York.

The capture of the king rendered the escape of his queen and only son a matter of the utmost importance to his party. The Duke of Somerset having hastily arranged the order of their retreat, gave the word for the baggage-guard to mount, and attend their royal mistress and her son. Favoured by the deepening shades of evening, that now obscured the watery landscape, they set

forth through gloom and rain, with heavy hearts, upon their perilous journey.

"Now, madam, which way?" asked the Duke of Somerset, when, after three hours' hard riding, they reached a spot where several roads met.

"Northward, northward, Somerset," replied the queen. "The gentry of Yorkshire, of Westmoreland, of Lancashire, and of Durham, are faithful to King Henry's cause."

"They will be more valiant than wise who venture to show their loyalty," said the duke. "For my part, I have some doubts as to the nature of the entertainment we may meet with anywhere within reach of the news of this calamity."

"Let us push forward, at any rate, and try their friendship," said the queen.

"Is not the prince spent with riding so far and fast?" asked Somerset.

"Not at all, my lord duke," replied Prince Edward. "I only wish my father, and my preceptor, Sir John Fortescue, were of our company, and then I should feel happy."

"Happy, my boy!" cried the queen. "How can you talk of happiness, when all the hopes of Lancaster are in the dust, and we are houseless fugitives, dependent on the charity of any good Christian who will be generous enough to risk life and property by harbouring such unfortunates as we?" She paused and wept.

"Cheer up, sweet mother," said the prince. "Our foes have won the day now; but fortune may smile upon us to-morrow; for all have their turns, says Dr. Morton. I wish he were here, too. I mean to make him an archbishop, when I am King Edward the Fourth."

"King Edward the Fourth!" repeated the queen; "I hope that may not be a fatal title to

thee, my boy. York's aspiring heir, the Earl of March, beareth the name of Edward, as well as thee, remember; and thou art too likely to fall into his hands; and then—"

"And then," repeated the young prince, "and then, my mother, I would defy the false traitor to his teeth, and bid him pay me homage."

"Your grace is much to blame to allow my young lord to prate so boldly on such matters," said the duke, impatiently. "If I might venture to offer advice, it would be, that all should keep silence, and ride amain."

"Thy counsel is good, Duke Henry," replied the queen. "Onward! my merry men."

So on they rode, through good roads and bad, only pausing when their horses were spent, at a friendly convent by the way-side, for refreshment and dry garments. Here the queen would fain have left her son, under the care of the lady abbess, who offered to disguise him in female apparel; but he would not consent to be parted from his mother.

In the morning the rain had ceased, and the sun rose in a cloudless summer sky, but his glorious beams brought little comfort to the sorrowful fugitives. However, as the young Prince of Wales said, it was something to have fine weather to travel in, instead of a continuance of heavy rains, which would have swollen all the rivers they had to cross, and rendered them unfordable.

When they had breakfasted, and bidden farewell to the friendly abbess and her nuns, they again set forward, crossed the county of Leicester, and entered Yorkshire. Late at night they reached one of Lord Clifford's castles. The earl was absent, having fled from the rout of Northampton; and his lady sat, sad and mournful, in

her lonely halls, not knowing whether her husband were living or dead. The servants, dreading that it would be followed by some signal act of vengeance on the part of the Earl of March, if their lady ventured to receive and entertain the queen and her train, counselled Lady Clifford to urge them on their journey; but the lady nobly replied, "It shall never be written in the chronicles of England, that I refused to receive and shelter the wife of my sovereign and her son, in their time of trouble." So she came herself to the castle-gates, and prayed Queen Margaret and her followers to enter and abide with her as long as they could with safety. The queen accepted shelter for that night, but they all rose up by peep of dawn, and pursued their way.

The nobles and gentry of Yorkshire were well affected to the cause of Lancaster: nevertheless, that cause was so completely ruined for the present, that it would have been almost madness for any individual, openly, to appear to show kindness to the family and adherents of King Henry. So wherever the queen and her little party sought refuge, they received kind words it is true, and offices of friendship, but offered with alarm, and accompanied with advice and entreaties for her to pursue her journey to Scotland; where alone, they said, "she could hope for protection."

Some, less considerate for her feelings than their own private interests, gave her neither aid nor comfort, but prayed her to depart from their country, lest she should be the means of bringing fire and sword upon them, from the victorious and revengeful Earl of March.

Sick at heart, the woful, weary queen, and defeated general of King Henry, pursued their perilous journey. Their jaded escort gradually re-

duced in numbers from day to day, either from sickness or desertion, till, when they entered the bishopric of Durham, four only, out of the twenty with whom they left Northampton, followed their fortunes. These men, though faithful to their mistress, were much cast down at the unfavourable aspect of her affairs, and would gladly have been excused from attending her any further.

In the bishopric of Durham, the friends of Lancaster, like the adherents of the Red Rose in Yorkshire, were timorous, and ventured not to render the party assistance openly.

In all the towns and villages placards were affixed on the walls, describing the persons of the queen, the Prince of Wales, and the Duke of Somerset; offering large rewards for their apprehension, and warning people against harbouring any of them, on pain of death. This deterred them from taking the main road; and they proceeded by circuitous by-paths, as well as they could judge, in a northward direction. But they travelled in doubt, in fear, and often in error, through wild tracts of wild, desolate land; and not unfrequently, they were bewildered in moors, marshes, and tangled forests. This would have been very distressing for travellers who were going a long journey, under any circumstances; but for those in hourly apprehension of being overtaken by men thirsting for their blood, or eager to obtain a price for betraying them into the hands of their foes, nothing could be more dreadful.

In addition to the alarm which the queen and Somerset felt lest they should fall into the hands of the Earl of March, there were other causes of apprehension, common to all who travelled in small companies in these barbarous times. This was from the desperate gangs of robbers, who in

festes the high-roads, and had their dwelling in forests and other solitary places, where they lurked during the day-time, and at night roamed abroad, like ravening wolves in quest of prey.

Since the commencement of the fatal wars of York and Lancaster, which had put an end to all law and good order, employment was scarce, and evil men resorted to the highways to plunder unguarded travellers. The bishopric of Durham, in particular, was infested by a band of ruffians, who were the terror of every one. The chief by whom they were commanded was a noted outlaw, and went by the name of the Robber of Hexham.

CHAPTER III.

THE QUEEN AND HER PARTY CONTINUE THEIR SAD JOURNEY.—
ARE RELIEVED BY SIR RALPH GREY.—CAUTIONED AGAINST THE
ROBBER OF HEXHAM.—ATTACKED IN THE FOREST.—THE DUKE
OF SOMERSET KILLS A ROBBER.—THE QUEEN AND PRINCE
ESCAPE.

ONE evening, Queen Margaret and her weary party, after wandering about during a whole day without rest or refreshment, had the mortification of finding that they had returned to the same point from whence they set out in the morning. This, too, was in the vicinity of a castle, where they had been previously refused admittance.

“Cold comfort this, my royal lady,” observed the Duke of Somerset, casting a rueful glance upon the raised draw-bridge, which effectually prevented them from crossing the moat. “What shall we do now?”

“Blow a lusty blast on the bugle-horn which

is suspended at the bridge-post, and demand admittance in the name of King Henry, my lord duke," said the young prince.

"King Henry's name is no longer a pass-word to open the barred gates of the towns and castles in these once loyal counties, my fair cousin," observed Somerset.

"Then, if they will not open their gates for a courteous summons, good my lord, blow another blast—a blast of defiance, and tell the traitor churl, who refuses to receive the Queen of England in the time of her need, that I, her son, Edward Plantagenet, will cause him to be hanged over his own gateway, when I come to be king," returned the prince.

"Hush, hush, my little lord," said Somerset. "Suppliants like ourselves must never venture to use threats, when our suit is denied. If you accustom your lips to the use of such lofty language, we shall all be cut short in our journey, I promise you."

"Am I not the son of a king, and should I not demean myself as such?" said the prince.

"The bulrush bends before the storm, and rears its head when that is overpast, my Edward," said the queen: "the oak defies the adverse elements, and is rent."

"Ay, mother; but the oak cannot bow its stately form like the poor, pliant rush; and the bulrush could not withstand the tempest if it would," returned the prince. "Besides, it is not every oak that shivers in the blast: there be many that have withstood the storms of ages."

"Hark ye, my fair cousin," said the duke; "you prate too loudly, and too boldly, both for time and place; and, one day or other, that proud tongue of yours will put your life in jeopardy

If the lord of this castle refuses to receive us, he is more honest than if he admitted us, and then detained us all as prisoners, by doing which he might gain both money and favour from our foes. Therefore, we may esteem him as a friend, though after a cold sort, otherwise we had not dared to parley so long under the shelter of his walls. So I pray you, revile him not."

"What is his friendship worth, if he will neither give us supper nor beds?" said the prince. "A generous foe would have accorded both at our need, had we asked it."

While they were thus discoursing, a basket was lowered from the walls: it contained provisions, and a scroll of vellum, on which were written these words:—

"Sir Ralph Grey, the lord of this castle, greets his sovereign Lady, Queen Margaret, well, and prays her not to be displeased with him for not offering her the hospitality of his castle. But there is a traitor within his walls; therefore he beseeches her to speed on her northward journey, and to avoid all towns, lest she fall into the snare of him who hath caused a net to be set in her path; and to beware of the Robber of Hexham, and his men, who lurk in the green-wood, and infest lonely paths. So no more from her grace's assured friend and faithful servant, who sendeth these lines at peril of his life.

"Farewell. R. G."

The queen sighed deeply, and raised her eyes to heaven, when she had read Sir Ralph Grey's letter, exclaiming—"Whither shall I go to seek me out a refuge for my child? If we enter the towns, we shall perish by the sword; and if we seek the fields, behold, there is a lion in the path!"

"Howbeit, we have got a supper, at any rate," said her hungry followers; "and as we have eaten nothing all day, we will make bold to break our fast."

"You are heartily welcome, my friends," said the queen; "and I and my son will sit down on the green grass, and eat with you."

It was not usual for queens and princes to take their meals along with persons of inferior degree; for in those days the sovereigns of England were waited upon by their nobles, who served them on the knee, with much state and ceremony. But Queen Margaret used great condescension to her faithful followers, in order to increase their attachment to the cause of her husband and her son. So, with the young Prince of Wales, and the Duke of Somerset, she sat down with the men-at-arms, and supped on the provisions with which Sir Ralph Grey had supplied them, and cheered their spirit with a flask of Burgundy wine, which he had added to his present.

When all had eaten and drunk, the queen returned thanks to God for this seasonable refreshment, which, in their hunger and distress, had indeed appeared like a table spread in the wilderness.

The summer sun was sinking when they first came beneath the towers of Sir Ralph Grey's castle; and now the soft shades of twilight were beginning to obscure the landscape. Nevertheless, as the moon was entering her second quarter, and would soon shed her friendly beams, they judged it best to proceed on their journey.

In fact, they had no other choice, as the only town near them, which was Hexham, was occupied by the soldiers of the York faction; and, after the warning they had received from Sir

Ralpn Grey, it would have been highly imprudent to linger near his castle.

Among a number of perils, Queen Margaret thought the chance of falling, with her son, into the hands of the Yorkists, the worst; so she directed the Duke of Somerset to strike into one of the wild, unfrequented paths that crossed the barren moor of Hexham, in a northward direction.

A more desolate track they scarcely could have chosen. On one side there was a tangled forest, and on the other a dismal morass, intersected with black, sullen-looking streams, and large pools of water; while the prospect before them was bounded by a chain of rugged hills. The queen felt a deep melancholy stealing over her when she entered this dreary vale, which the beauty of a splendid July evening alone prevented from wearing a still more gloomy appearance. But the forest trees were in their midsummer pride of foliage, the young moon was rising in her virgin lustre to gild the barren hills, and the marshy plains were enamelled with a thousand flowers.

The gay spirits of the Prince of Wales had never failed him, and he continued to beguile the weary way by his lively prattle and amusing remarks on every object that attracted his attention. Sir John Fortescue, the preceptor of this promising young prince, was one of the most learned men of that age; and he possessed so pleasing a method of conveying instruction, that the mind of his royal pupil was already stored with the treasures of history, and he had made a considerable progress in the learned languages. French, which was his mother's native tongue, he spoke with facility; and being possessed of a lively imagination and a high spirit, there was in his manners and conversation the mingled charm of the

artless simplicity of childhood with the information and acquirements of riper years.

The kings and princes of the House of Lancaster were all distinguished for their attachment to learning. Prince Edward was the last of this line; but there was every promise of his equalling, or surpassing, the most accomplished of his predecessors.

The doting affection with which this prince was regarded by his mother, rendered the overthrow of all her hopes at Northampton, and the loss of power and royalty, all trifling considerations, in comparison with the dangers with which his life was threatened during their perilous retreat towards the Scottish border. Hitherto, however, they had met with many mortifications, and had been exposed to hardships and privations not a few; but no positive cause of immediate alarm had threatened them till this night, when, after travelling about four miles from Sir Ralph Grey's castle, they found themselves suddenly bewildered among a variety of crossing tracks, on a lonely spot, at the foot of a winding hill, between the river and the wood.

While they paused to consider which it would be the best to pursue, a sharp shrill whistle was heard from the midst of a thicket, just above them.

"Hark!" cried the prince; "is not that a signal, to give notice to our foes of our approach?"

The Duke of Somerset bent his cross-bow, and launched an arrow, at a venture, into the thicket. There was an immediate rush and rustle among the bushes, and the body of a man, with the shaft in his neck, came rolling down the hillock, and fell at the noble archer's feet, covered with blood.

Some women and children would have shrieked

aloud at this sight, but neither the queen nor her young son either started or uttered an exclamation, for they knew that the skulking ruffian had confederates close by, who had stationed him there as a spy. The marshy nature of the ground they were traversing, had compelled them to alight from their horses, and to pursue their journey on foot. Before they could arrange any plan of defence, eight robbers rushed out of the forest and attacked the queen's escort.

The Duke of Somerset, at this sight, flung down his cross-bow, and, drawing his sword, cried out to the queen, "Fly, madam!—fly with your son, and leave me to do battle for you!"

Queen Margaret, still fancying that these ruffians were a party of Yorkist soldiers, who had been sent by the Earl of March to pursue her, took her son by the hand, and, while the robbers were engaged in mortal combat with the Duke of Somerset and her four attendants, she fled with him into the dark recesses of the forest.

She was in breathless terror, not for her own danger, indeed, but for that which threatened the dear object of a mother's hopes and fears. Fortunately, both the Queen Margaret and her son were swift of foot, so that they were enabled to exert great speed when their path was open; and where it was tangled with briars and underwood, they forced their way through all obstructions, with as determined a spirit as if they had been foresters born. But ever and anon, the clash of steel, and the shouts of the combatants, reached their ears, and filled them with dismay. It grew fainter and fainter in the distance, as they fled. They were sometimes in utter darkness, and sometimes the glorious young moon gleamed like a silver lamp above their heads, through the

branches of the stately oaks, or feathery birch-trees under which they passed.

CHAPTER IV.

THE QUEEN ENCOUNTERS THE ROBBER OF HEXHAM, WHO VOWS FIDELITY TO HER.—HE CONDUCTS HER TO A CAVERN.—BRINGS HER TIDINGS OF THE DUKE OF SOMERSET.—THE QUEEN AND THE PRINCE PROCEED TOWARDS SCOTLAND.—CAPTURE OF BERWICK.—QUEEN MARGARET HOSPITABLY RECEIVED BY THE QUEEN OF SCOTLAND, WHO BETROTHS HER DAUGHTER TO PRINCE EDWARD.

AT length the queen and her son came to an open space, in the midst of surrounding trees. The glow-worms were sparkling like so many little stars on the green velvet turf, and the dew-drops glittered on the herbs and tall blades of grass; the sweet summer moonlight shed a shadowy splendour on the quiet spot, and no sound was heard, save the murmur of the light breeze, fanning the broad leaves of the chestnut and the oak.

"Mother," whispered the young prince, "let us tarry here awhile, till we hear somewhat of the fate of our followers, and cousin Henry of Somerset. Poor gentleman! I wonder how he has sped in his perilous affray with the ruffians."

"Ill enough, I fear me," said the queen; "for they were unequally matched. Alas! misfortunes appear to pursue every one that shows friendship to us, my boy."

"Ought we not to have tarried to lend them our aid, mother?" asked the prince.

"What could we have done, Edward?" sighed the queen.

"Marry, I, for one, could have taken up Duke Henry's crossbow, and shot at one of the villains from behind a tree," said the prince.

"Hist!" cried the queen; "I hear the shrill, sharp barking of a dog, close at hand."

"And so do I," replied the prince; "and it soundeth like the voice of my pretty spaniel, Gaston, who was stolen from me on the road to Windsor."

The next moment a beautiful black and white spaniel bounced through a thicket, and leaped upon the prince, whom he caressed with an appearance of the most lively joy.

"Ah! Gaston, Gaston!" cried the prince hugging his recovered favourite in his arms. "Thy friendship passeth that of our northern nobles I find; for thou lovest me as well now I am a houseless wanderer, as thou didst when I abode in the princely towers of London and Windsor, and men bowed their knee to me."

A call-whistle was now heard in an adjacent glade of the forest. Gaston picked up his ears, and replied to it by a short, shrill bark.

"Whist, Gaston," said the prince, striking him with his glove, "wouldst thou betray thy master?"

Queen Margaret was filled with great alarm at this circumstance; but her terror amounted to agony, when she perceived a man of gigantic stature, and menacing appearance, advancing towards them with a drawn sword. His dress was partly military, and partly that of a forester; and the quick eye of Margaret perceived in an instant that, although he evidently was approaching them with hostile intentions, he did not wear the White Rose badge of York in his plumed cap.

Gaston sprang towards the stranger with a bark of friendly greeting at first, wagging his tail, and testifying the same marks of attachment that he had shown to the fugitive prince. But, as if aware that the ruffian meditated some evil against his former master, he presently drew back with a low, sullen growl, and placed himself before the young prince, as if to defend him from the threatened attack of his foe.

Whether it were the evident alarm of this sagacious, little animal, or the stern countenance of the midnight ranger of the forest, that awed the high spirit of the young heir of Lancaster, I will not take upon me to say. Certain it is that, seized with a sudden panic, he sought the shelter of his mother's arms, and clung to her garments in terror, when the ruffian waved his glittering sword before his eyes.

The queen, with that ready presence of mind which belongs to great characters, exclaimed, "Harm not the child, for he is of royal blood!" Then taking the reluctant boy by the hand, she presented him to the robber with these words: "Behold the son of Henry, your king, and save him from those who seek his life."

"And who art thou, who speakest such strange words?" demanded the robber, gazing with astonishment on the lonely pair. The beauty and courage of the majestic mother astonished him no less than the loveliness of the noble boy, whose lofty birth she had just proclaimed.

"I am Margaret, your queen," she replied; "I have fled hither with mine only child, Edward, Prince of Wales, from the fatal battle of Northampton. I have been hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, what time I have wandered from place to place, with this precious boy, seek

ing refuge and finding none, till at length our few faithful followers were attacked by robbers, in the marshy glen yonder, and we have fled hither, all desolate and sore afraid, to sue for thy protection."

"Thou knowest me, then, lady," said he.

"Do I not speak to him whom men call the Robber of Hexham?" asked the queen, who guessed that it could be no other.

"The same," he replied, "and your grace's most faithful servant," continued he, bending his knee, and kissing the queen's hand.

"Will you protect my son?" said the queen.

"With my life, royal lady," he replied.

"May God bless and reward you for the compassion you have shown to us in our distress," said the queen, bursting into tears.

The robber-chief was deeply touched, and observed with a sigh, "Your grace is too grateful to me on this occasion. I have not performed a good action; I have merely relented from committing a dreadful crime; for I thought to have slain you, and that fair child, for the sake of your rich attire and costly ornaments. But from this moment, I abandon the cruel trade of a robber, and will become a faithful follower of your cause, royal lady. Permit me now," continued he, "to conduct you, and my lord the prince, to a place of safety, where you may obtain shelter and repose for the night."

The robber-chief then led the royal fugitives by a winding-path, half hid among the fern and brambles, to a cave in the forest, where he was accustomed to conceal his share of the booty from his band of outlaws; and there he prayed them to remain, while he procured food for them from the cavern where the other robbers dwelt.

He did not carry the queen and the Prince of Wales there, because he was fearful of their being recognised by some of the ruffian gang who were his followers. In this he only acted a prudent part; for one among the band had formerly been in King Henry's service and was the person who had stolen the prince's spaniel, which he had sold for a good price to his captain.

Queen Margaret and her son slept that night in a deep, dark vault in the earth, but surrounded with gold, and jewels, and costly garments. They had no bed, but slept on velvet cloaks, lined with fur, which the Robber of Hexham spread for their accommodation.

In the morning, when the queen and her son began to lament the fate of the Duke of Somerset and their faithful followers, who were, as they supposed, slain on the preceding evening, the robber-chief bade them be under no uneasiness on their account; for the duke, when he found the queen and prince had escaped, being himself badly wounded, proclaimed his quality, and obtained quarter of the robbers, by the promise of a rich ransom. As it was impossible for the duke to travel for some days to come, and the queen was anxious to reach a place of greater security than a robber's cave, her new follower promised to attend her and her son in the capacity of guide and escort to the Scottish border.

By the way, he informed her that King James the Second of Scotland, who had taken advantage of the contest between the rival parties of York and Lancaster to invade England, had been slain at the siege of Berwick, by the bursting of one of his own cannons. His widowed queen, Mary of Gueldres, a princess of great spirit and courage, had continued the siege after his death, against

the wishes of some of the Scotch nobility, especially of James Douglas, Earl of Angus, who was Regent of Scotland for the young king: he made a point of opposing the queen in everything, and had expressed his opinion that the town of Berwick-upon-Tweed would never be taken from the English.

"No more it would," exclaimed Queen Margaret, "if the English were as one: but we are a divided nation, and therefore are our foes exalted on our ruins."

"Hush, madam, hush!" replied the robber-chief; "remember you are going to appear as a suppliant before these foes."

"Ah!" replied the queen, "and it is that which makes the bitterness of my dire reverse of fortune. But it is for the sake of my husband and my child that I am about to humble myself before the Scottish queen."

The town of Berwick had surrendered to the Queen of Scotland two days before Queen Margaret reached the border. The victorious Mary, after having publicly returned thanks in the cathedral church for the success that had attended her arms, had retired to her private apartment, with her two children, the young king, James the Third, then about seven years old, and her daughter, Princess Margaret, when she was informed that a lady and her son, Lancastrian fugitives of high rank, requested admittance to her presence.

"The visit was unseasonable," the Queen of Scotland said: "for she was a widow of but few days' standing; and having fulfilled the intentions of her royal husband, by continuing the siege, and taking the town of Berwick, she was now

desirous of indulging her grief in private for the death of her beloved consort."

The importunity of the strangers, however, prevailed; and a lady, closely veiled, and muffled in a dark cloak, leading a boy of singular beauty and nobility of presence by the hand, was introduced into the apartment. The widowed queen, in her mourning weeds, was sitting in a chair of state, under a canopy, with her orphan children on either side of her.

"Who is it," said the Queen of Scotland, "who has been thus urgent in seeking an audience of one who would fain be permitted to indulge the sorrows of her too-recent widowhood in solitude, for at least a few brief days."

"One more unfortunate than thyself, royal Mary," replied the lady throwing back her veil; "the wife of a captive monarch, the mother of an outlawed prince. I am she who, scarce ten days ago, was called the Queen of England, but who now comes, a houseless and desolate fugitive, to ask a refuge in thy dominions."

"Margaret of England!" exclaimed the Scottish queen, rising from her chair of state, and advancing to salute her sorrowful guest. The little princess by her side cast a tender glance of sympathy and regard upon the young Prince of Wales, as, in obedience to a sign from his mother, he advanced, and gracefully bending his knee before Queen Mary, pressed her hand to his lips, and raised his eyes to her face, with looks that pleaded for compassion for his weeping parent.

"He is of the same age as thine own fair son, my royal sister," said Queen Margaret; "and think what would be thy feelings if thou couldst behold him exposed to the same sad reverse

of fortune, and reduced to the dire distresses through which my princely boy has recently passed.

She then related all that had befallen herself and the young prince, since the fatal battle of Northampton.

The eyes of the widowed queen filled with tears while listening to Queen Margaret's strange perils and distresses; and the gentle princess, her daughter, sobbed aloud for very pity of the hardships and calamities that had befallen the young Prince of Wales.

The widowed Queen of Scotland, in opposition to the Earl of Angus, her rival in the regency, who espoused the cause of York, gave Queen Margaret and her followers an honourable asylum in her son's dominions; and betrothed her young daughter, the Princess Margaret, to the exiled Prince of Wales. She also furnished Queen Margaret with men and money to renew the struggle with the victorious faction of York, with which she returned to raise the spirits of her adherents, in England, delivered King Henry from his captivity, and slew his rival, the Duke of York, at Wakefield, on the last day of the year 1460.

THE END.









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